


# MANY THINGS TO MANY PEOPLE

Formal Mentoring Schemes &  
their Management 2019: a report



This report was compiled and written by  
Dr Judie M Gannon  and Dr Rhianon Washington  
[International Centre for Coaching & Mentoring Studies \(ICCaMS\)](#)



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## Executive Summary

There has been in a *shift* in mentoring where more organisations, whether they are based in the private, public or third sector, are using mentoring schemes to tackle issues of development and disadvantage. This 'turn' in mentoring from private, informal relationships to organised formal relationships is achieved through formal mentoring initiatives or schemes. This study provides a deeper understanding of the size, scale and practices of formal mentoring schemes where previously the focus has been practitioner literature on how to run schemes or schemes operating in specific sectors.

Using a mixed methodology approach the study highlights key issues pertaining to the foundations of formal mentoring schemes, their processes and practices and the people who coordinate the mentors, mentees, stakeholders, funders and wider beneficiaries. A framework of the three P's is developed where the first 'P' is the 'Purpose' of schemes and captures the diversity of issues that formal mentoring schemes attempt to address. The focus of the stated purpose of schemes appears to be the driving force behind their engagement with stakeholders and operations. However, this theme of purpose also identifies how schemes have to tackle issues of intersectionality to connect with participants and those who fund formal mentoring initiatives. The durability of formal mentoring schemes also tells a mixed story of triumph over uncertainty and cost-conscious ways of operating which may not always play in favour of smooth processes. The second 'P' is the 'Practicalities' of formal mentoring schemes and highlights the forms of mentoring adopted by schemes as well as the processes and practices used to deliver schemes. The challenges of juggling practical administrative tasks, alongside the support of personal relationships, and more strategic scheme promotion and fundraising is highlighted here. Finally, the third 'P' of 'People' relates to those who have previously been obscured in most research on formal mentoring schemes; mentoring scheme coordinators. This investigation reveals the extent of knowledge and expertise used and developed by mentoring scheme coordinators and their experiences which makes this a potentially rewarding role that can also be isolating.

We conclude by highlighting the understanding the research brings to the field of mentoring and reflecting on some of our research decisions and deliberations. We also suggest next steps in practical and more strategic terms for our burgeoning understanding of formal mentoring schemes and their management.

## Introduction

Mentoring is a long-established helping relationship where traditionally a more experienced mentor has supported the development of a less experienced mentee. Societal, economic, technological changes, alongside recognition of disadvantage in society and work, as well as growing personal aspirations have, however, prompted a mentoring 'turn'. This 'turn' has transformed much of the focus on mentoring from what were private and informal developmental relationships into formal developmental opportunities for those who might not have the social skills or networks to secure their own mentors.

This 'turn' has also emerged where a growing number of individuals have realised the value of their own lived experiences and interpersonal skills to act as mentors. Aiding and abetting this 'turn' in mentoring has been the simultaneous flourishing of coaching and recognition of human interactions as fulfilling ways of supporting others and being supported ourselves, through what may be small life changes or substantial social, political and economic upheavals (Shoukry, 2017). The growth of formal mentoring relationships, and the flourishing of their vehicle; formal mentoring schemes, is the consequence of this 'turn' in mentoring "where the supportive relationship of mentoring has emerged as a crafted intervention, introduced and driven by third parties to enhance the development of mentees (and mentors)." (Gannon & Lawton-Smith, 2019).

The burgeoning of formal mentoring has resulted in the growth of practitioner guidance on how to design and operate formal mentoring schemes. It has also stimulated various contexts (for example, youth, entrepreneurial) and occupational groups (for example, nursing, teaching) to pursue policies and practices where formal mentoring is embedded in their services and career stages. However, this has led to rather limited empirical research on formal mentoring schemes per se. Instead, the academic literature has relied upon in-depth case studies of schemes rather than stepping back to understand the wider field of formal mentoring schemes, their management, their initiators and operators, the challenges they face and their impact. This study attempts to contribute to this deficit in understanding this 'turn' in mentoring by exploring formal mentoring schemes, their scale, scope, purpose, practices and processes as well as those who are responsible for their day to day operations and sustainability.

Initially, an overview of the rationale for this study is provided, followed by a brief synopsis of the extant literature on formal mentoring schemes. The research methodology deployed for the study is then discussed ahead of the presentation of findings. The findings provide the mainstay of this report and are split into three themes, the three P's – Purpose, Practicalities and People. The theme of Purpose is devoted to the foundational aspects of schemes and includes deliberation of what respondents said their schemes set out to achieve, their funding, origins and development, longevity and size and scale. The theme of Practicalities, the second P, is centred around the process and practices adopted by formal mentoring schemes and includes coverage of forms of mentoring adopted, the approaches taken to administering, recruiting, matching, supporting and training participants, and evaluating schemes, as well as gaining appreciation of key influencers, governance and the challenges schemes face. Finally, the third P for People, is focused on those who run mentoring schemes, the work they do, the skills they deploy and their backgrounds and the training and development which supports formal mentoring scheme delivery.

Following the results, the Conclusions are provided which capture the understanding gleaned from the findings and their implications for formal mentoring schemes, their management and their stakeholders. Reflections on the study and the Next Steps in developing this area of mentoring are considered.

## Overview of the rationale for the project

Anecdotal evidence, and some academic literature (Passmore et al., 2017; Clutterbuck et al., 2017; CIPD, 2015) suggests a growing shift from informal to formal mentoring relationships, however, less empirical research has been undertaken on formal mentoring schemes, as the channels for delivering and nurturing formal mentoring relationships. This study set out to remedy this situation by attempting to scope the size and scale of formal mentoring schemes across the UK and understand more about the mentoring they seek to deliver, their purpose, origins and the features and practices which deliver useful mentoring interactions and relationships to participants.

The overall aim of the study was to examine the size, scale and nature of formal mentoring schemes and their management. In order to achieve this aim the following objectives were formulated:

- To review formal mentoring schemes in the UK and build a map of formal mentoring schemes
- To investigate the purpose and rationale, origins, funding and size and scale of formal mentoring schemes
- To explore the processes and practical features of formal mentoring schemes, and identify the work mentoring scheme coordinators perform in operating schemes
- To develop a set of recommendations to recognise and support formal mentoring schemes and their coordinators.

### Insights from the Literature

Despite suggestions of the growth in formal mentoring across the private, public and third sectors (Passmore et al., 2017; CIPD, 2015) less attention has been afforded the scale and management of formal mentoring schemes. Mentoring is portrayed as infamously difficult to define, given its different formulations and evolving nature. The EMCC's definition of mentoring offers a valuable and encompassing depiction of mentoring which is sufficiently broad and enduring, depicting it as:

*"Mentoring is a developmental process, which may in some forms involve a transfer of skill or knowledge from a more experienced person to a less experienced, through learning dialogue and role-modelling; or in other forms may be a partnership for mutual learning between peers or across differences such as age, race or discipline."* (Gray, Garvey & Lane, 2016 p. 302)

The more established nature of research on informal mentoring, where supportive learning relationships emerge naturally between mentors and mentees, has meant that studies comparing formal and informal mentoring relationships often malign the quality and outcomes of formal mentoring relationships (Eby et al., 2008; Inzer & Crawford, 2005; Desimone et al., 2013; Menges, 2016). The limited effectiveness of formal mentoring, compared to its informal counterpart, depicted in these studies, tends to focus on the characteristics of mentors or mentees. These studies rarely identify the nature of the mentoring advocated, the approaches to mentoring scheme management, or the knowledge and skills of those managing them. There is then a critical omission in our understanding of the nature, scale and management of formal mentoring schemes and how they create the space for mentors and mentees to interact and be nurtured, to realise the specific goals of individual participants and of mentoring initiatives themselves. This omission prompted the investigation undertaken.

Developments in mentoring research have included acknowledgement of new forms of mentoring, such as, e-mentoring, reverse, speed and peer mentoring (Mangan, 2012; Kurre et al., 2014). In addition, problems of evaluating mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2006; Murphy & Lewes, 2017), and recognition of a potentially dark side to mentoring, also known as toxic mentoring or 'judgementoring' (Washington & Cox, 2016; Hobson, 2017) highlight the complexity of this powerful interpersonal relationship. Much of the recent focus of mentoring (and coaching) research has highlighted the importance of the relational perspective to these learning relationships (De Haan, 2010; De Haan & Gannon, 2017). Yet, the academic literature has been surprisingly quiet on how formal mentoring schemes, and specifically the work of their coordinators, create and nurture the space for mentors and mentees to learn. Growing acknowledgment of the difficulties of orchestrating successful mentoring relationships reinforces the need for researchers to scrutinize formal mentoring schemes as the design, operation and development of schemes may be able to tackle these issues of complexity and toxicity, to create the best spaces for mentoring relationships to flourish.

Until now little empirical focus has been placed on understanding the growth and nature of contemporary formal mentoring interventions. Where examples of formal mentoring schemes studies do exist, they have largely been in-depth case studies or based on schemes in specific sector settings (Seraj et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2017). For example, Clutterbuck, Kochan, Lunsford, Dominguez and Haddock-Millar (2017) capture a valuable variety of case study and sectoral examples of formal mentoring schemes in their comprehensive handbook of mentoring. By focusing on gaining a wider perspective of formal mentoring schemes beyond the organisational and sectoral variety, this study offers a distinctive contribution to the 'turn' in mentoring research.

Two noteworthy exceptions exist in relation to the limited field of formal mentoring scheme studies. A recent contribution is Bhide's (2017) investigation of multi-country mentoring programmes, and much earlier is a study undertaken in South Africa (Abbott, Goosen & Coetzee, 2010). Bhide's (2017) study discovered that mentoring schemes were generally managed by Human Resources professionals, that senior leadership and senior HRM directors often sponsored schemes to ensure their success. Other features of this quantitative study highlighted the value of providing training and support to mentors, preparing them for their mentoring roles and guaranteeing continuing communication between mentors and mentees. Scheme success in this study was also associated with a clear role for technology in strengthening communication between participants and addressing problems.

Abbott and colleagues (2010) used a mixed methods approach to examine formal mentoring schemes and gain insights into the roles and characteristics of mentoring scheme coordinators in South Africa. Their findings highlighted the diversity of settings and organizations where schemes occur, and the range of scheme formats and activities. The researchers also commented on the challenges of ascertaining the value and impact of schemes, as just over half of the respondents admitted to evaluating their schemes. In contrast to Bhide's (2017) investigation, Abbott and colleagues (2010) discerned that it was not only Human Resources professionals who operated formal mentoring schemes. The South African study also identified the use of steering committees to design, develop and support the coordinators operating mentoring schemes, with external trainers and consultants playing additional advisory roles. The contemporary nature of the Bhide (2017) study in comparison with Abbott and colleagues (2010) work means the South African respondents were less likely to deploy technology to manage their schemes. These two investigations of formal mentoring schemes imply there may be trends in scheme design and management (Abbott et al., 2010; Bhide, 2017) which can inform formal mentoring scheme understanding and practice. Therefore discerning insights into formal mentoring schemes across sectors offers a poignant way of understanding how formal mentoring is being used, and what shapes formal mentoring scheme design, practice and management.

In this vein other authors have highlighted the lack of empirical evidence on those who coordinate and manage formal mentoring schemes. Clutterbuck (2006) described mentoring scheme coordinators as the 'unsung heroes' of mentoring initiatives. Koczka's (2017) exploration of mentoring scheme management used the phases of mentoring to understand the diversity of the mentoring scheme coordinator role but no empirical research was undertaken to tackle this gap in the literature. By investigating the role of formal mentoring scheme coordination, those who fulfil these roles and their experiences, this report delivers previously undisclosed insights into a prevalent human development phenomenon. Alongside the exploration of the stated purpose of schemes, their design and practices this study addresses many of the omissions in the academic literature and the weaknesses of the anecdotal reporting prevalent in the field of mentoring. As such it offers a distinctive contribution to the 'turn' in mentoring research.

## Methodology

A mixed methodology was adopted, comprising both quantitative and qualitative phases to data collection, an overall QUANqual design. Initially, a survey was developed based upon the only known widescale study of formal mentoring schemes carried out by Abbott and colleagues (Abbott, Goosen & Coetzee, 2010) in South Africa. Deploying a modified version of their survey, we composed an extensive online survey. The survey comprised of 60 items covering three main areas of interest; the nature and scale of formal mentoring schemes, their operational management and the tasks, skills and support of mentoring scheme coordinators. The survey was piloted and reviewed under Oxford Brookes University's research ethics protocol. The online survey provider, Survey Monkey was used to deliver the invitations to participate and complete the instrument.

Towards the end of the survey participants were invited to participate in interviews with members of the research team. Questions were based upon themes which emerged from the survey and specifically focused upon the experiences of those operating mentoring schemes, dealing with the day to day challenges of delivery as well as the longer-term issues of survival and sustainability of formal mentoring schemes. Twenty five interviews, each lasting 60 minutes, were conducted and recorded, with thematic analysis undertaken to identify topics related to established issues apparent in the survey results. Additional themes also emerged from the more narrative insights of mentoring



scheme delivery and management voiced in the interviews and these are reflected upon predominantly in the third theme People, in this report.

Sampling for the survey was initially based upon targeting those who were known to the STAMINA Mentoring Network and then extended through building a dataset of registered mentoring schemes across a variety of sectors where formal mentoring schemes were known to exist. These settings included personal and professional development, healthcare, youth work, educational settings, organizational socialization and career support, social care and justice, business and entrepreneurial development and immigration and refugee support. Based upon networks and internet searches using the terms 'mentoring scheme', and then topics and/or sectors, such as 'refugees', 'youth', 'education', the team built a dataset of over two hundred and fifty mentoring schemes. We worked with companies responsible for developing and supporting mentoring software systems and several of these organizations agreed to distribute the invitation to participate in the survey – thank you MentorNet and PushFar. We also approached a variety of established mentoring and coaching organisations to promote the survey and received support from the European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC), as well as professional organisations, the Association of Women in Property, the Institute of Hospitality (IoH), and the Institute of Public Care (IPC). We also paid for three months (June, July and August 2019) of online advertising of the survey through the e-newsletter of the trade journal Coaching at Work. Finally, we also initiated a social media campaign based on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook promoting the link to the survey and the value of participation.

From the database developed we suggest a 25% response rate, but respondents may have had multiple approaches (direct invitation, social media alert and invitation from software company). The results presented are those based upon responses collected between February and early August 2019. In all we had over 170 responses to the survey though not all responses were complete and for flexibility we allowed respondents to skip questions. Responses averaged out at around 130 responses per question, but this did vary between 90 and 160. Due to inconsistencies in responses we have concentrated on descriptive analysis of responses in this report.

In addition to using the details derived from the internet searches, the research team built a virtual map on the basis of the publicly accessible data available via search engines. The map is accessible via the STAMINA Mentoring Network website and this link <https://bit.ly/2kuR6yG> and allows scheme coordinators to search for other schemes in the same geographical area (in case they may be able to benefit from sharing resources) or across the same main purpose of their scheme (to understand how other similar schemes may be tackling specific challenges). Figure 1.0 captures the map display.

Figure 1.0 Mentoring Network Map – via link

## Mentoring Scheme Map



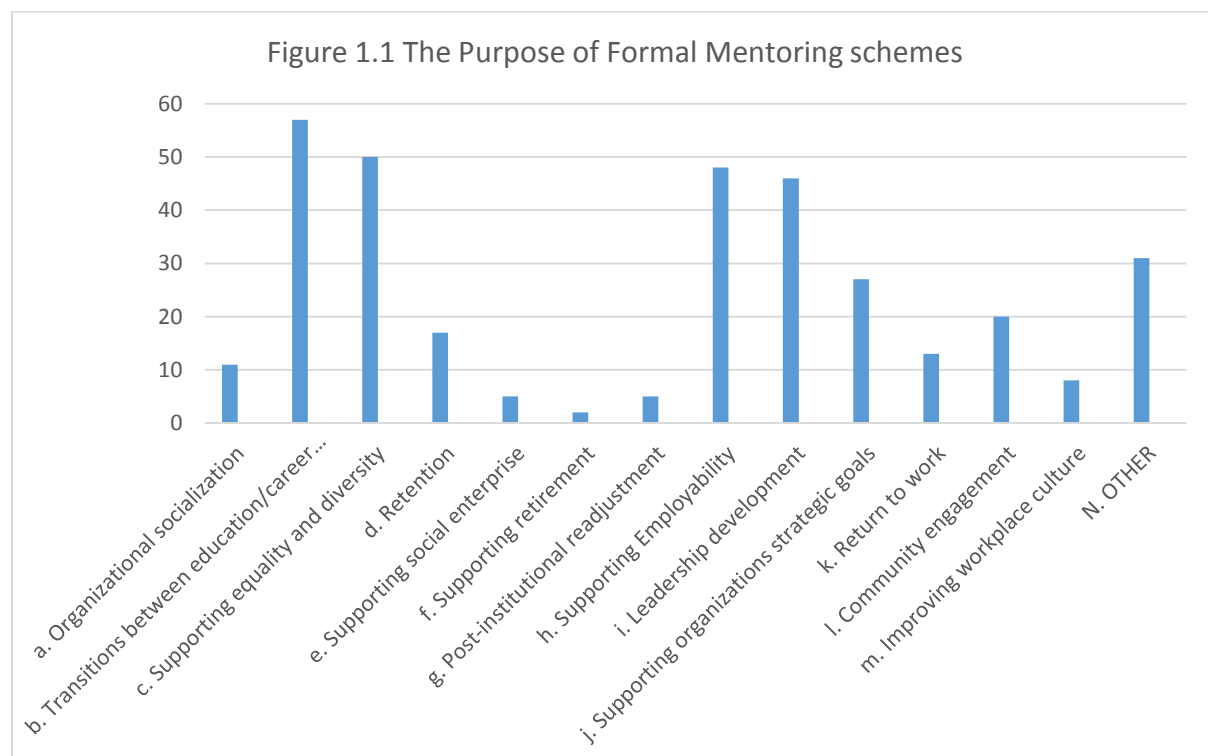


## Theme 1: Purpose - The Foundations of Formal Mentoring Schemes

This theme focuses on the purpose of schemes, their sustainability, origins and development, the contexts and economic sectors which they are associated with, as well as the size and scale of the relationships they facilitate. These features are the footings for formal mentoring schemes and subsequently shape their processes and management.

### 1.1 The Purpose of Formal Mentoring Schemes

The purpose of formal mentoring schemes varies widely with; supporting transitions (between education/career or professional stages), equality and diversity, employability and leadership development identified as the four main options, as depicted in Figure 1. Another aspect of these options identifies how the purpose of mentoring schemes can be focused within organisations or professions (for example, socialisation, retention) but may also extend beyond organisational boundaries (post-institutional readjustment, supporting retirement, supporting social enterprise, community engagement).



In the 'other' category respondents indicated further diversity in relation to the purpose of their schemes. These included supporting; job/professional roles and difficult situations within professional/occupational roles, entrepreneurial development, adopters/carers, young people, digital capabilities enhancement, reverse mentoring to facilitate knowledge sharing, veterans, sufferers of mental health conditions, care leavers, executives' transitions into senior roles and homeless young people.

The word cloud below identifies the purpose of schemes identified in this additional 'other' category as supplied by respondents. Further nuance in the stated purpose of schemes is apparent where respondents were asked to explain the purpose of their formal mentoring schemes in their own terms. Analysis of these statements suggests the purposes of schemes can be distilled into categories such as; transitions, broad development, diversity and inclusion, building networks, and exposure to role models and experiences. Schemes focussing on transitions include those which support young people from school into university, professionals moving through ascribed levels and veterans moving from the services to civilian life.

Schemes which prioritised building networks and exposure to role models and experiences included those which introduced graduates or schoolchildren to employers and entrepreneurs, or aspiring artists and performers to established Arts professionals. This could be within quite a narrow field, for example one professional association or membership society or a geographical location, broad industry or economic sector.

An aspect to highlight here is that the statements made often point to the complex and nuanced nature of mentoring schemes where priorities of purpose were espoused but flexibility was recognised due to the specific needs of mentors and mentees. This adaptability and the layered nature of mentoring initiatives, where the main purpose of a scheme was accompanied by a description that included association with other purposes, corresponds with scheme coordinators' experiences of spending time explaining to mentors and mentees just how they could make mentoring work for their specific needs and partnership.

Several themes emerged from the responses to the question 'What are the origins and models of development for your mentoring scheme?' For most schemes their origins depended upon three roots; the demand-led, supply-led and the collaborative. Demand-led schemes were identified through research, stated requests or a needs analysis, while for supply-led schemes their origins were based upon an opportunity to support others and remedying disadvantage and difficulties.

*'The programme was introduced as a response to research conducted by the University, which showed that students in receipt of the XXX scholarship (i.e. those from lower socio-economic backgrounds) were performing worst in terms of graduate employment.'* and *'our research which identified (the) need to improve the talent pipeline into the xxx industry focusing on under-represented groups, those entering into, progressing within, returning to or transitioning into the xxx industry.'*

Examples of mentoring schemes with supply-led origins included;

*'Our co-founders came from working class backgrounds and were working within the creative and cultural industries. They saw that many of their contemporaries came from a place of privilege and wanted to encourage people from all backgrounds working in the creative and cultural industries to donate their privilege and support young people.'* and *'We wanted to share the wealth of experience of experienced directors.'*

Finally, those mentoring schemes that had collaborative origins mentioned the combined efforts of stakeholders which led to the initiative, for example;

*'The e-XXXX scheme is a three-way partnership between students, the institution and professional associations representing prospective employers.'* and *'it came to fruition organically, with people realising that they have useful experience to offer as mentors and mentees approaching us for guidance in their early careers'.*

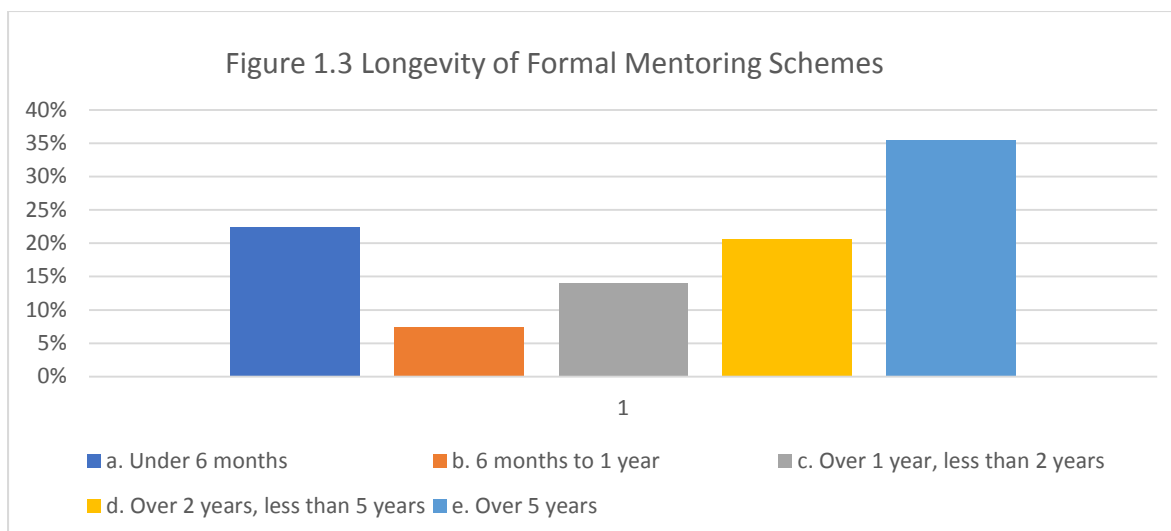
Other themes which emerged in relation to origins included schemes; as part of members' benefits, augmenting organisational programmes of development, supporting the delivery of organisational goals and objectives (often specifically in relation to diversity and widening participation) and examples of good practice identified elsewhere. Notable examples of good practice which had spurred on the mentoring schemes delivered by respondents included; the Museum Association Mentoring for All scheme, the National Mentoring Consortium, the work of the Academy of Medical Sciences, Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch and the Universities of Lund and Michigan, Women in Science Engineering and Technology, the Fabian Society mentoring scheme, the Lean In Energy program and Business in The Arts North West.

### **1.3 The Longevity of Formal Mentoring Schemes**

Aspects of the mentoring literature suggest that sustainability of mentoring schemes can be an issue where priorities change and sponsorship and funding wane. Accordingly, the survey asked respondents to identify how long their schemes had been in operation, including any pilot initiatives in this crude assessment of sustainability. Whilst responses will be dependent upon those we managed to reach through our sample search it is encouraging to see over a third of schemes had been in operation for more than five years. Several of the schemes in this category had a considerable heritage, dating from the mid-1990s or early 2000s.

Notable, is that over one quarter of respondents identified their mentoring schemes as new additions to formal mentoring provision, having launched in the last year to six months. While there are some suggestions in the wider literature (Passmore et al., 2018; CIPD, 2015) that formal mentoring is an increasingly popular intervention a note of caution is offered here. It may be that these new schemes have featured more prominently in the social media and search channels we used to target potential respondents; hence a disproportionate representation of newer schemes appear in our results.

In the 'other' comments section of this question, almost a third of respondents mentioned their schemes had first been piloted as limited size and duration schemes, ahead of full programmes being launched. Several respondents also mentioned how informal and peer schemes had morphed into more formal arrangements, and that initial programmes had developed into multiple schemes serving slightly different groups within and across organisations. Such insights reinforce the contagious nature of mentoring where schemes are seen to add value in particular settings. Almost twenty percent of respondents mentioned that the continuity of their mentoring scheme provision had been broken at certain points. These fractures in provision were typically the result of changes and uncertainty in funding support or key personnel.



### 1.4 Funding Formal Mentoring Schemes

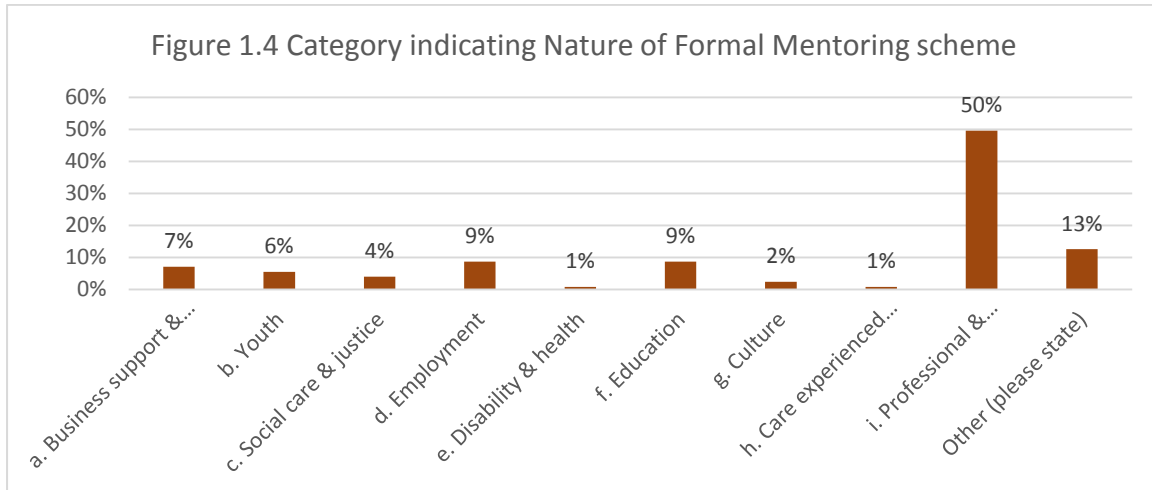
Mentoring is often depicted as a cost effective human development intervention with a recent CIPD learning and development report (CIPD, 2015) alluding to its value on these terms. The cost effective aspect to mentoring typically arises from the way that mentoring deploys mentors acting in volunteer roles and with varying degrees of training and guidance offered to support mentoring relationships, but the voluntary dimension may also include wider organisation and delivery of mentoring relationships.

Responses to questions related to the funding of schemes recognise these issues, a third of respondents classified their schemes as unfunded, based entirely on volunteer mentors and voluntary support from scheme coordinators and trainers. Almost one half of respondents identified that their schemes ran with limited funds based on voluntary support by mentors supplemented by small parts of learning and development or HRM budgets, membership fees, central or local government funding, bids to specific funders (Big Lottery, European Social Fund), departmental budgets, employer or corporate sponsorship or in the case of University schemes Access funding. The remaining group suggested more secure funding underpinned their mentoring schemes though again they referred to allocations of budgets from, similar sources and often more than one organisation. It is apparent here that formal mentoring schemes are often reliant upon funding outside of their organisations to operate and that access to these sources may be precarious requiring continual appeals for sustained support.

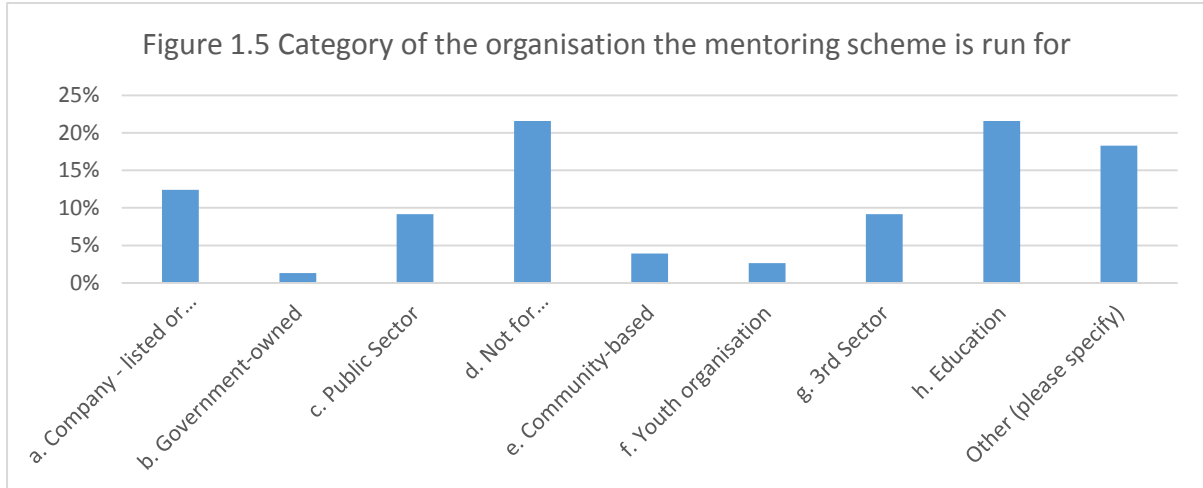
Funding for formal mentoring schemes was used to employ coordinators, develop guidance and resources, deliver training events, support monitoring and cover travel expenses. In only about ten percent of cases was mentoring paid for by mentees through fees for securing a mentor, and in less than five percent of cases, were mentors paid for their roles, above and beyond reimbursement of their travel expenses. It is interesting to note that diversity and inclusivity and learning and development budgets, were often mentioned as reliable sources of support where schemes were targeting leadership or professional development and/or tackling inequalities. Comments of; *'costs are kept to a minimum'*, *'some basic funding from departments and lots of free staff time'* and *'very little funding'* emphasise the cost conscious nature of mentoring schemes and implications of this aspect are identified elsewhere in the survey results.

### 1.5 The Context of Formal Mentoring Schemes

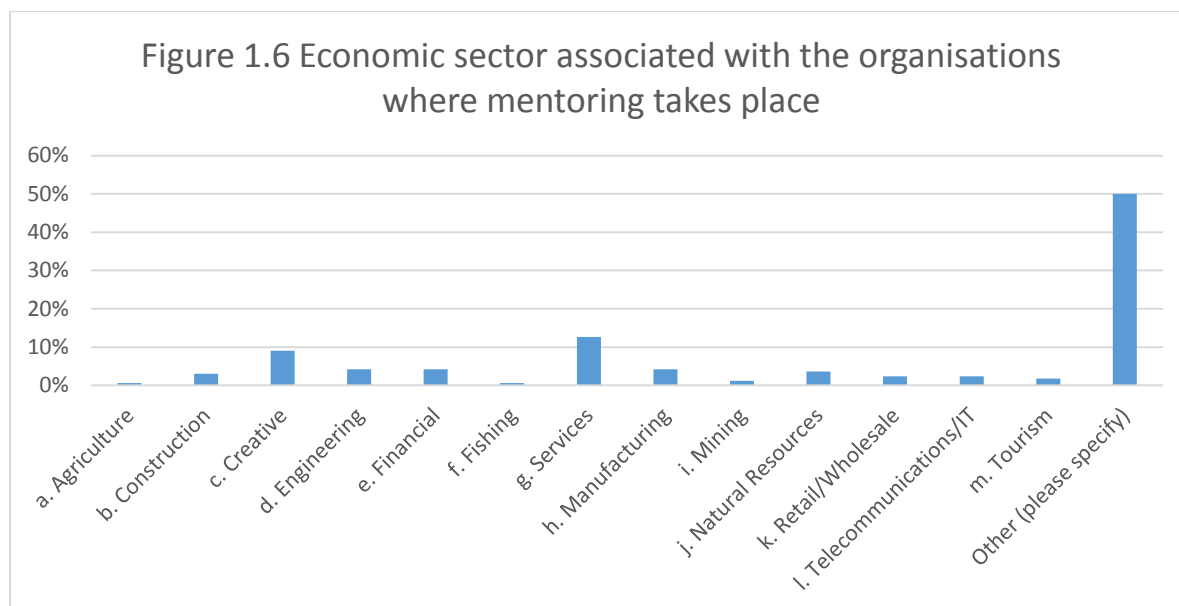
Several questions asked respondents to indicate the context or sector in which their scheme operated. In question six of the survey, ten categories (including one of 'other') were identified. In Figure 1.4 it is apparent that over half of all schemes are focused upon professional and personal development. However, the other category provided a more nuanced indication that categories overlapped. For example, career development covered both personal and professional development and employment. Other respondents identified the gender or another diversity dimension to their professional development/employment, youth or education category focused schemes. These results highlight again the issues of intersectionality evident in formal mentoring schemes.



A later survey question asked respondents to indicate the industry or sector of the organisation they run their mentoring scheme for. From Figure 1.5 it is evident that the not for profit or social enterprise and education sectors are particularly involved in formal mentoring initiatives. The private sector is associated with only twelve percent of schemes amongst the respondents to this study, yet from the funding question we know schemes are often facilitated through corporate sponsorship and employer funding. The public sector and third sector represent smaller percentages of organisations associated with formal mentoring schemes. However, there may be some blurring between these two industrial categories and the government owned, community-based, and youth organisation sectors. In the 'other' category respondents identified student union, university departments and societies, funding councils, professional associations, charities and housing associations, which could be categorised under the wider education, third sector and/or not for profit/social enterprise categories.



In the question that asked respondents to indicate the economic sector associated with their scheme half of all responses selected 'other' and identified the economic sector as; charity and not for profit, government, international aid and development, NHS and healthcare, criminal justice, energy, medical, property, sciences, social services (including youth services) and education (at various levels).

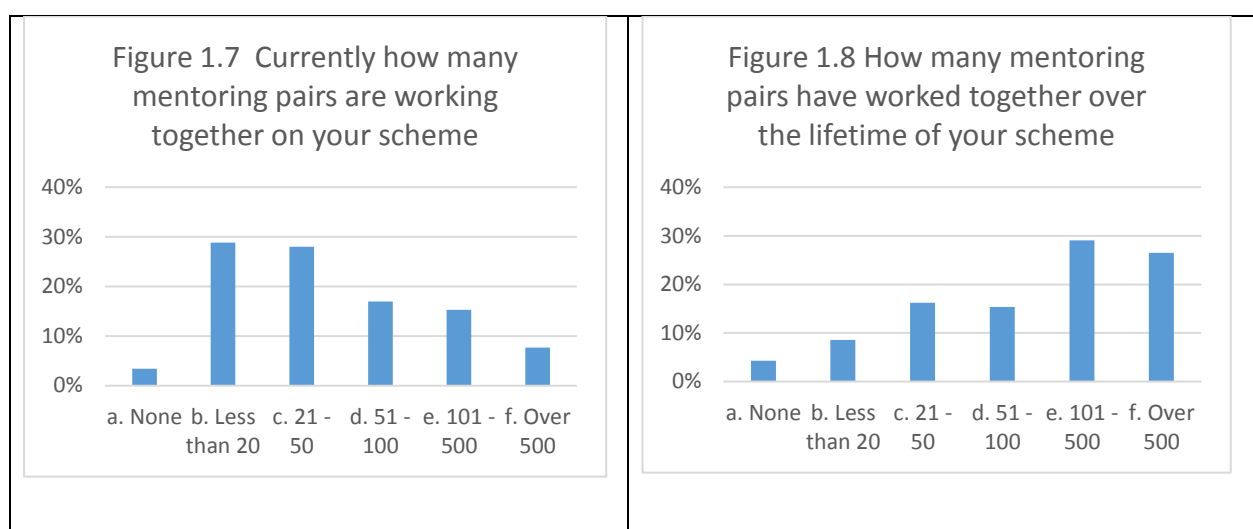


These responses across questions on the context and economic sectors where formal mentoring schemes take place suggest an emphasis on mentoring as a viable development and support intervention where budgets are limited, and mentors are accessible via voluntary contributions. Issues related to managing volunteers and sustaining support are evident in some of the comments made and their implications will be explored further in later sections of the report.

## 1.6 The Size and Scale of Formal Mentoring Schemes

In an attempt to capture the size and scale of formal mentoring schemes, respondents were asked to indicate the number of mentoring relationships (typically pairs) working together on their schemes. Figure 1.7 identifies that schemes come in a variety of sizes from very small, fewer than twenty relationships to those that operate over 500 relationships. Nearly sixty percent of schemes were currently supporting fewer than twenty and between 21 and 50 mentoring relationships.

When respondents were asked to indicate how many mentoring relationships had worked together over the lifetime of the mentoring scheme over twenty-five percent said over 500 relationships had taken place and nearly a third indicated between 101 and 500 relationships had worked together. These figures roughly correlate with the longevity of the schemes responding to the survey and the numbers of relationships currently working together.





### 1.7 Who are your Mentors and Mentees?

Those identified as mentees in formal mentoring schemes exemplify some of the established views of mentoring as supporting those early in their development or careers, or those who may be disadvantaged in certain aspects of life or their careers. Responses ranged from those aged between 16-18 years of age, first year undergraduates, final year undergraduates, to all women in STEM, adopters, middle level female leaders, engineering students, early career scientists, trainee teachers, those with a disability in the 18-25 age range, veterans/ex-service personnel, those freelancing in our sector, women returners, rising stars and entrepreneurs.

For mentors again a variety of backgrounds were identified but with a distinction they were often labelled as senior or experienced, for example; senior leaders and executives, senior in the Trust (NHS), established professionals, managers and partners in professional service firms, established alumni, successful or experienced entrepreneurs, and chartered members. However, there were examples of more open categories such as; anyone from the local area, all other staff, those who have studied humanities and the arts, final year students and individuals over 21 years of age from all walks of life.

### 1.8 Summary of Theme 1: The Purpose of Formal Mentoring Schemes

This section identifies the diversity and complexity of formal mentoring schemes tackling wider social challenges, in addition to the healthy development of individuals. That mentoring schemes are often dealing with very vulnerable groups and people with complex needs, whilst organising and supporting volunteers to offer assistance, suggests that mentoring scheme coordinators face issues of complexity and intersectionality in the management of these initiatives.

Schemes range in size (numbers of relationships) which also suggests scheme management practices will differ. Alongside economies of scale specific aspects of support may be important for some groups and the context or sector where mentoring takes place. For example, in relation to safeguarding. The longevity of schemes is balanced against insinuations of the uncertain nature of sustainable funding for some schemes. A third of schemes ran almost entirely as volunteer initiatives, while half of the respondents referred to the pressures of precarious funding and the remaining percentage felt more securely funded through fees and specific initiatives. These foundations for formal mentoring schemes have practical implications for how schemes are managed as discussed in the next theme of Practicalities.



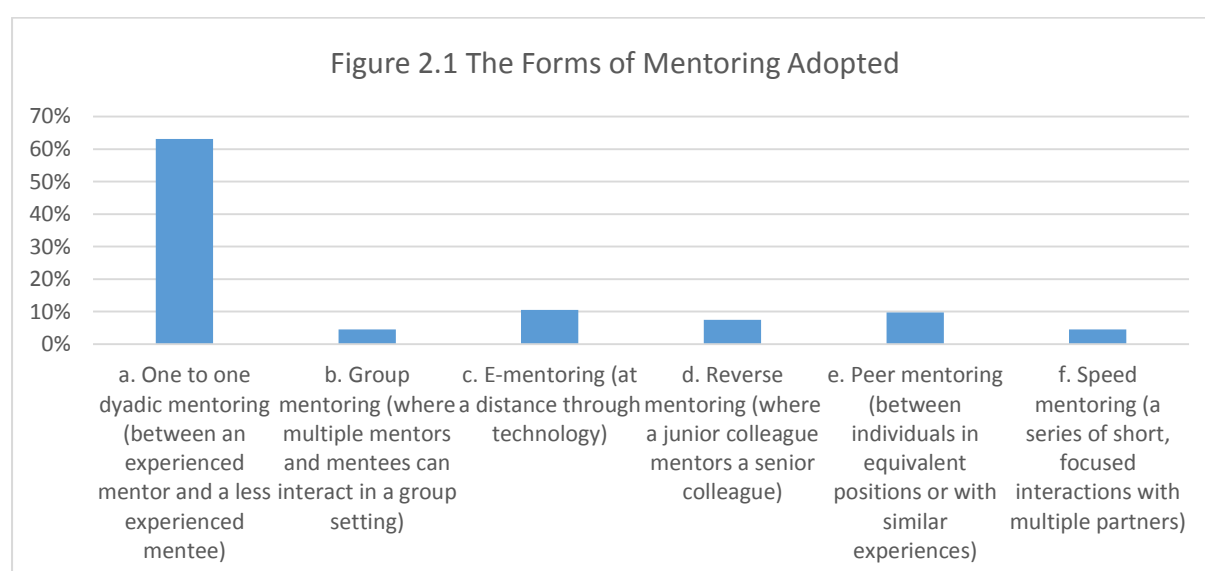


## Theme 2: Practicalities - The Functioning of Formal Mentoring Schemes

This theme examines the practicalities of formal mentoring schemes, it specifically identifies the forms of mentoring adopted, the features of schemes and the resources used to support mentoring relationships. The frequency and nature of mentoring relationship interactions are examined as well as an appraisal of the approaches to matching, administration and the evaluation of schemes. The final section identifies the key challenges and difficulties faced in operating formal mentoring schemes.

### 2.1 The Forms of Mentoring Adopted

While some of the mentoring literature (CIPD, 2015; Clutterbuck et al., 2017) has highlighted an increasing diversity in forms of mentoring the survey responses clearly indicate that one to one, dyadic mentoring dominates provision – Figure 2.1. The comment box for this question allowed respondents to identify where combined forms of mentoring were adopted. From these responses it became evident that newer forms of mentoring (group, e-mentoring, reverse, peer and speed mentoring) were often used to augment dyadic mentoring and provide greater flexibility for mentors and mentees.



Almost one third of respondents commented in this section and remarks included; *'mainly a but with c and e'*, *'closest to a but with elements of d'*, and *'Our scheme started off as dyadic mentoring but this year we launched as also reverse and peer mentoring. Mentoring may or may not take place virtually. It depends where mentors and mentees are located.'* and *'All of the above; depends what is needed.'* These results suggest that diversity in forms of mentoring may exist but are not replacing traditional dyadic mentoring relationships, instead they are augmenting them and adding flexibility to mentoring scheme provision.

### 2.2 Mentoring and other forms of supportive relationships

Mentoring provision is often allied to coaching and other forms of developmental support so understanding how formal mentoring schemes might differentiate between mentoring, coaching and counselling seemed a relevant aspect to examine. Just under 75% of respondents indicated that their schemes do differentiate between mentoring and other forms of supportive and developmental relationships (for example coaching, counselling).

Open comments to this question elicited two broad types of responses, those that explained how their scheme differentiated between the nature of mentoring, coaching and counselling and those that explained how they communicated these different forms of helping relationships to their mentors and mentees. In relation to the first type of responses, comments included; *'This mentoring programme is largely based on raising employment aspirations. Counselling is different and part of wellbeing for our*

*students.’, ‘Alongside mentoring we also provide separate business advice, executive development, sector specific support and 121 support.’, and ‘We have another programme which includes coaching with a professional coach. We make this distinct, with different purposes. The cohort is also offered a mentor alongside a coach.’*

In relation to how these different, but related forms of supportive relationships were communicated to mentors and mentees, typical responses included; *‘The difference between mentoring and coaching / counselling is mentioned in the Mentor / mentee handbook and also discussed in the training sessions with both mentors and mentees.’*, and *‘We provide guidance including a table showing the difference between coaching and mentoring, thus clarifying the expectations of both.’* and *‘We promote purely the mentoring angle and through a mentor guide and briefings emphasise what form the mentoring relationship needs to take.’*

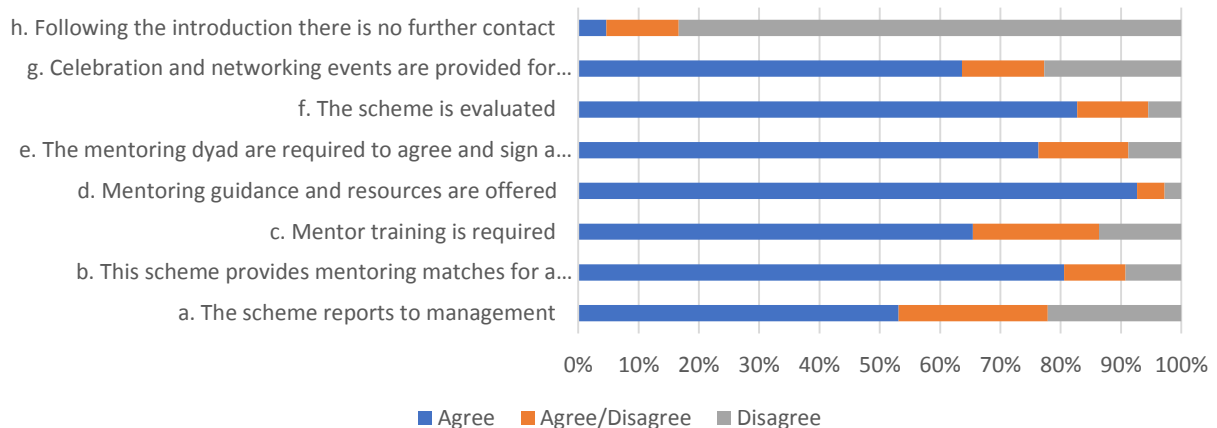
The blurring of the differences between different developmental relationships was appropriate for some formal mentoring schemes, and is evident in comments such as; *‘Mentoring and coaching tend to happen within one relationship, but counselling is provided in other ways.’* and *‘Often our mentors will take a coaching style, and are also encouraged to share advice, stories and ideas.’* The suggestion from these results is that schemes are mindful of the different forms of helping relationships and work with their participants in their settings, to scaffold and support mentoring, as a priority.

### **2.3 Features of Formal Mentoring schemes**

There is relatively little empirical research on the features mentoring schemes adopt and the scope of the arrangements mentoring scheme coordinators make to operate schemes proficiently. Several questions in the survey tried to ascertain the main features of formal mentoring schemes and their value. This section of the second theme identifies the elements adopted and Figure 2.2 identifies the extent to which respondents agreed with statements about their schemes.

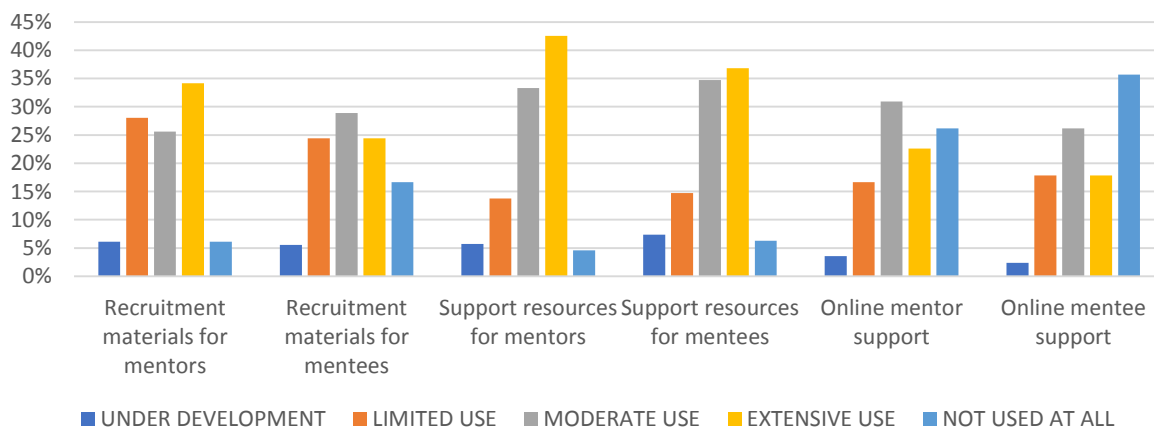
Just over half of the schemes report to management though for other schemes their independent and collaborative nature mean they do not fit within traditional hierarchical structures and their boundaries extend beyond defined organisational parameters. Over 80% of respondents indicate that mentoring relationships in their schemes last for a prescribed duration, allowing for clearer management of cycles of mentoring and resourcing. Two-thirds of respondents identified that mentoring training was required to participate, though this did differ slightly between sectors (education, entrepreneurial, youth). Mentoring guidance and resources were offered by over 90% of schemes, identifying where many mentoring scheme coordinators focus their efforts in managing schemes and their participants engagement. Over three-quarters of schemes require mentors and mentees to agree and sign a mentoring agreement, while over 80% of schemes are evaluated. Two-thirds of schemes provide some celebration of networking events for scheme participants and fewer than five percent of schemes make no further contact with scheme participants after mentors and mentees are introduced. These results suggest that the majority of schemes contain elements of ‘good practice’ in mentoring scheme operations in terms of guidance, boundaries and support, and the evaluation of their activities. These results are also important as they reflect the range of activities mentoring scheme coordinators will engage in to operate their schemes effectively.

Figure 2.2 Features of Formal Mentoring Schemes



Respondents also revealed the extent to which their schemes rely on different resources to support their mentors and mentees relationships. With five options ranging from 'Not used at all' to 'Extensive Use', with 'Moderate Use', 'Limited Use' and 'Under Development'. Figure 2.3 reveals widespread 'extensive' or at least 'moderate use' of support resources for mentors and mentees. There is more 'limited use' of recruitment materials for mentees and mentors which suggests that some schemes find the recruitment of participants easier or more challenging depending upon the nature of their scheme. While nearly half of the respondents suggested they made 'moderate' to 'extensive use' of online mentee or mentor support there were significant proportions, over a quarter for mentors' online support and over one third for mentees' online support, which said they did not use these formats at all.

Figure 2.3 Extent of Use of Resources for Mentoring

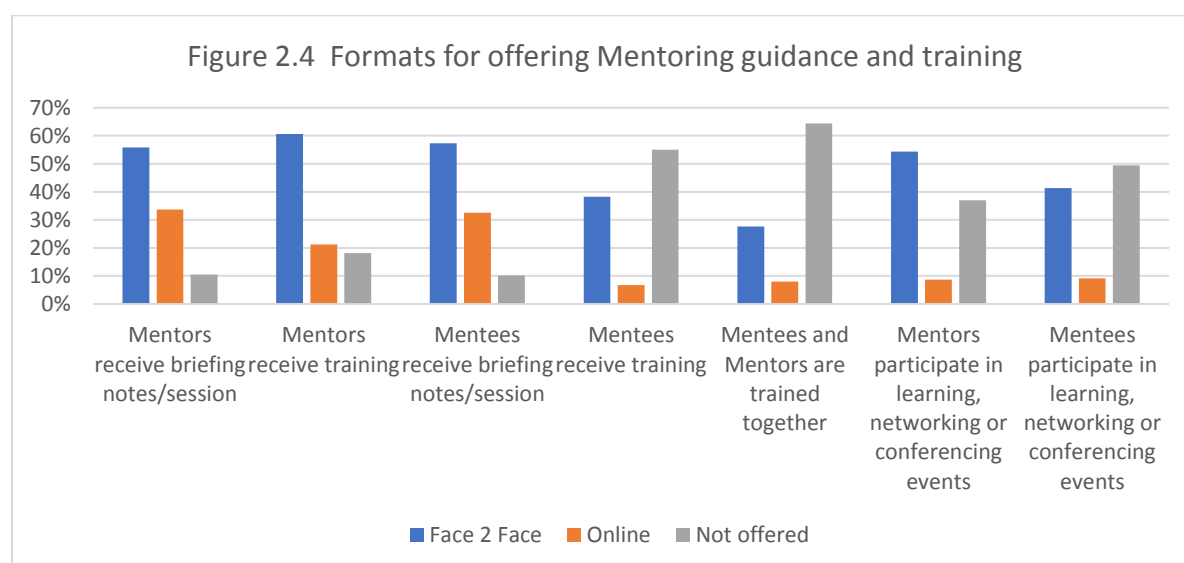


Related to these results were the open responses asking what additional resources would improve schemes and the experiences of mentors and mentees. There were over eighty open comments to this question, about half of all respondents to the study. When analysing these open responses several themes emerged, those of funding, knowledge and expertise and opportunities to share. The theme of funding can be disassembled further into; funding for staff to deliver mentoring schemes at appropriate levels, funding for training support and delivery, funding for online and IT solutions and platforms, funding for rewarding and recognising mentors contributions and covering mentees expenses (typically travel was mentioned here) and general funding which covered some or all of the above. Comments in relation to this broad theme included; *'Funding specifically for mentoring programme and for the facilitator and support for an external person to evaluate the programme.'* and *'Additional funding! Often mentors and mentees identify things that would help move the young person forward, but finances are often a barrier.'*

In relation to the knowledge and expertise theme, it comprised of sub-themes linked to online delivery of resources and the content of resources. The content of the second sub-theme identified respondents' interests in providing better training, supervision for mentors, tools and models to help mentoring pairs' interactions, insights into mentoring as opposed to other helping relationships and capturing mentoring success stories (through short films or written case studies). There was a significant proportion of responses which identified aspirations to develop and provide online resources. These ranged from identifying online and digital platforms of additional resources and materials but also ways of recording mentoring interactions and advice, and the use of webinar forums.

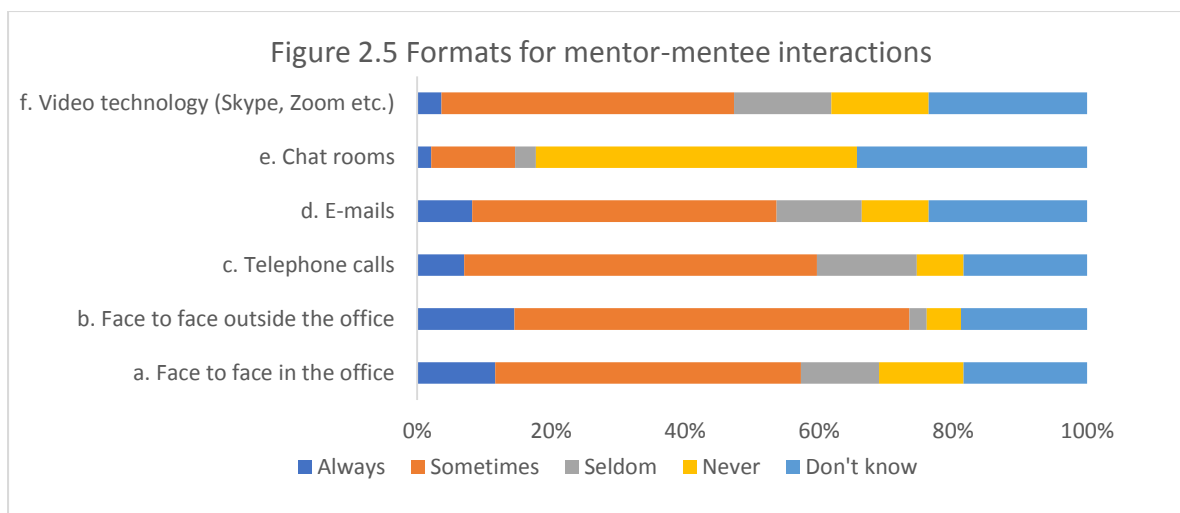
The final theme related to aspirations respondents had to improve their schemes' resources through creating or enhancing their communities via network events or opportunities for mentors and/or mentees and creating opportunities to share experiences. There were also responses which asked for more ideas about how to improve their schemes' resources by meeting other scheme coordinators, finding out about schemes in their own or related sectors.

The interest expressed in relation to improving mentoring scheme resources via online or digital platform provision is borne out in the next set of responses on the format of mentoring guidance and training in Figure 2.4. Most briefing sessions, resources and training are delivered in face to face formats, where provided. Mentors are more likely to receive training than mentees are. There is some evidence of mentors and mentees participating in networking and learning events, but they are less likely to be brought together to be trained as mentors and mentees. Online systems are used typically as ways to refresh training and briefing notes and sessions and are much more likely to be deployed for mentors. This reflects the need to be flexible in providing mentors with time efficient ways of enhancing their mentoring expertise.



## 2.4 Formats, Frequency and Monitoring of Mentoring Interactions

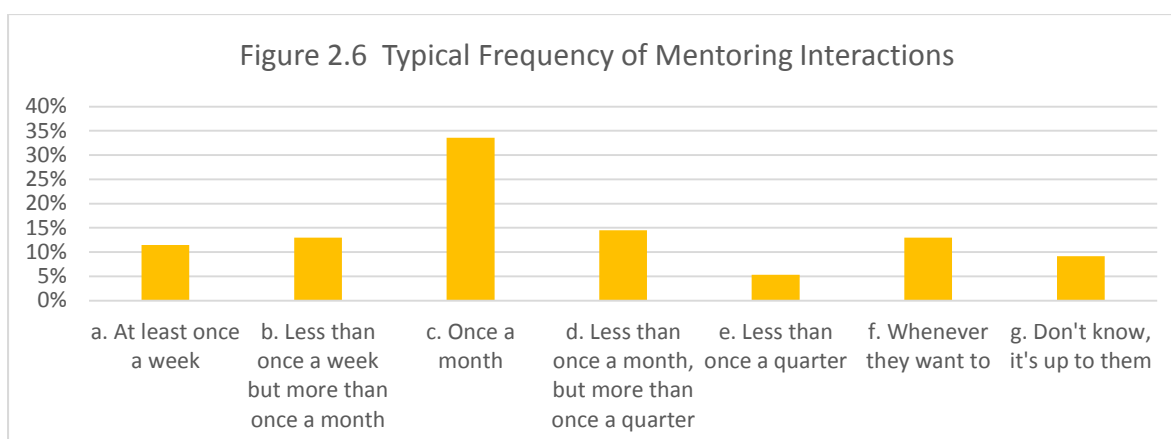
Understanding how formal mentoring schemes attempt to configure the interactions of the mentoring interactions they organise is important, allowing insights into the intensity and nature of relationships. Developments in technology have created opportunities for mentoring participants to adopt more flexible approaches to their interactions. Figure 2.5 identifies what respondents told us about their schemes' recommendations for how mentors and mentees interact.



While a significant proportion of schemes appear to be unclear (Don't know category) about how their mentoring pairs interact, chat rooms seem to be the least widely used formats. With most schemes advocating some face to face interaction, in the office or relevant organisational setting (School, University, health centre or community centre) or outside of the office (respondents in open responses mentioned coffee shops, parks). Face to face interactions were based upon the location of mentors and mentees and were typically augmented by telephone calls, emails and forms of video technology. There were a few schemes where mentoring took place solely through these virtual formats, in particular where one group of participants require safeguarding arrangements.

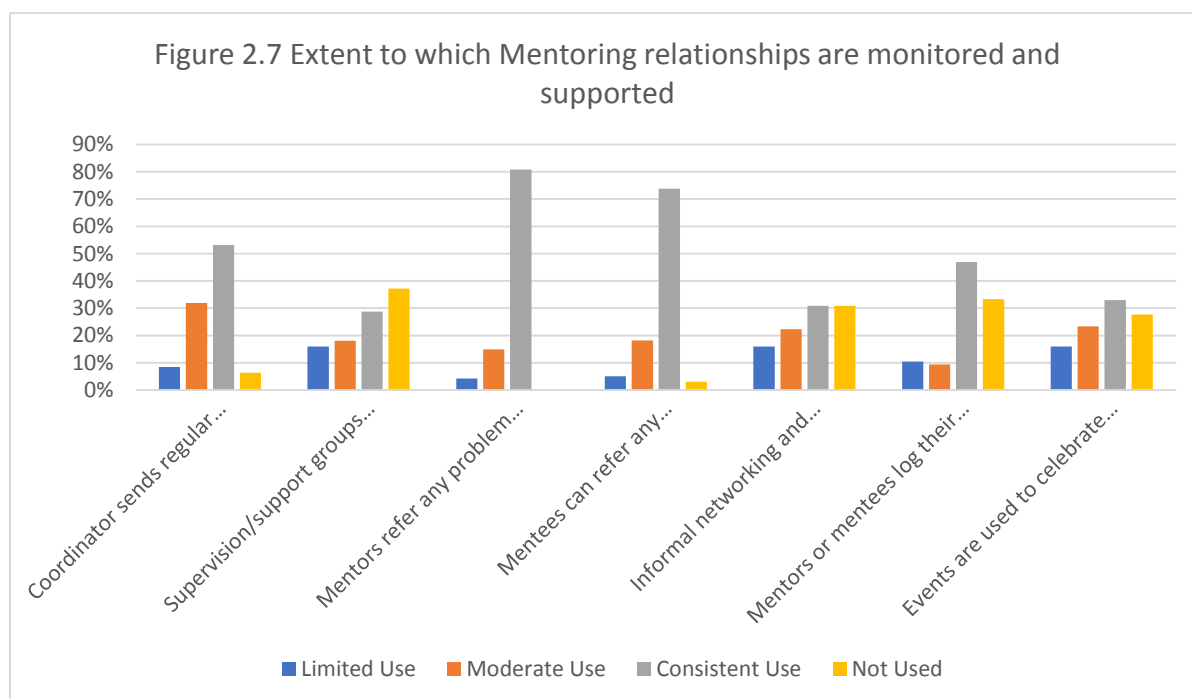
Open responses to this question identified WhatsApp, text messaging and Facetime being used, as well as specific online platforms, such as the software system MentorNet being mentioned by some respondents. Others stated, *'Our pairs are encouraged to, and often meet face to face for the first time, but are free to choose whichever method works best for them.'* and *'WhatsApp and they also meet at a variety of mentoring events as part of the programme - it is their choice in the end but a variety of meetings is offered and expected.'* and *'Rooms are booked on campus, or mentoring takes place in the mentors workplace.'*

Just over a third of all respondents identified that their mentoring scheme participants were advised to interact once a month but there was a spread of responses which indicate that some mentoring relationships may be much more intensive than others. Figure 2.6 reflects the variety in formal mentoring scheme provision where just under a quarter of schemes suggest interactions more frequently than once a month and just under twenty percent advocate interactions of less than once a month but more than once a quarter. Nearly, ten percent of respondents said they did not know and left it up to participants and thirteen percent similarly stated they suggested mentoring interactions take place 'whenever they want to'.



In relation to the monitoring and support of mentoring relationships as part of formal mentoring schemes, Figure 2.7 indicates that coordinators have a major role to play where mentors and

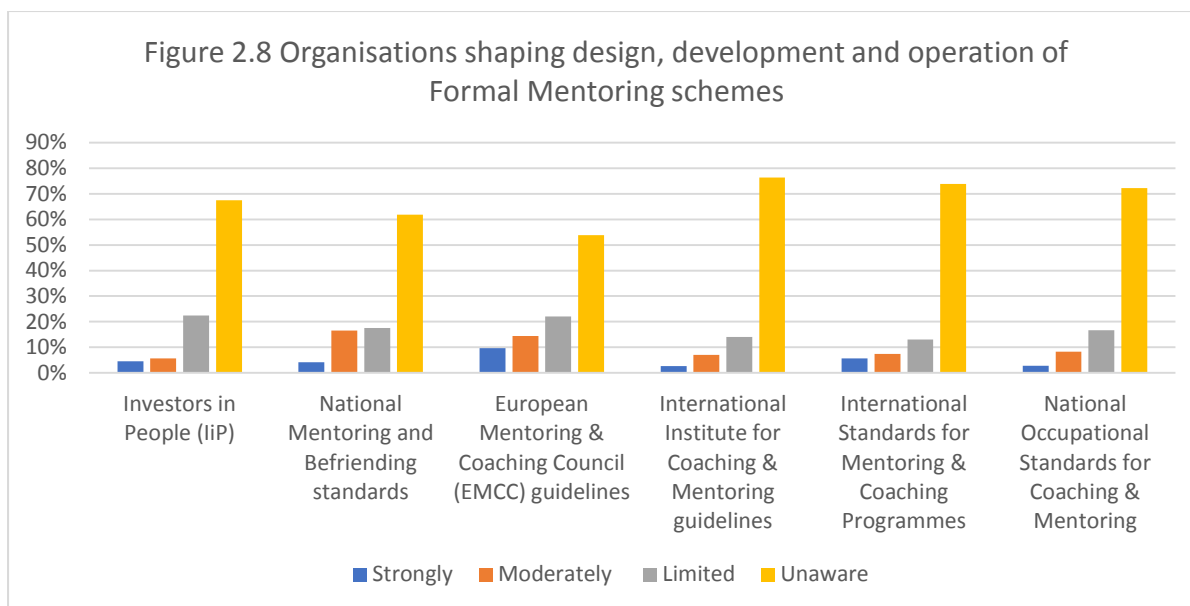
mentees refer any problems to them on an ongoing basis. Acting as mediators and confidantes to mentors and mentees may draw extensively on scheme coordinators' time and energy.



Coordinators also monitor and support relationships by sending out regular emails or calling mentors and/or mentees to check on relationships and their development. Forms of support for mentors, such as supervision or mentor support groups and informal networking and social events, are not widely used but have a place in some schemes. Almost half of all schemes ask mentors or mentees to log their activities and networks with either the coordinator or through a system, as a way of monitoring mentoring relationship development. Finally, almost one third of schemes consistently use events to celebrate their mentoring relationships and the outcomes of schemes, with over twenty percent, and over ten percent respectively, making 'moderate' or 'consistent' use of these more informal ways of building mentoring communities and monitoring and nurturing mentoring relationships. These results also reinforce the range of activities mentoring scheme coordinators are involved in, from very personal advice and support to participants, to administrative activities, to strategic lobbying for funding, to organising and planning events responsible for large numbers of participants.

## 2.5 Influencers of Formal Mentoring Scheme Design, Development and Delivery

There is limited coverage in the academic literature on what influences formal mentoring scheme design and development (Murphy & Lewes, 2017). Two survey questions focused upon key influencers of mentoring schemes and the factors which shape scheme design and operation. Initially, the professional and practice-led organizations, which have formulated standards or benchmarks for formal mentoring schemes were identified, and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they have influenced schemes' design, development and operation – see Figure 2.8. These standards offer frameworks and resources for analysing and developing the key features of schemes and the likely activities required to foster success, support scheme evaluation and allow the benchmarking of schemes against others.



The lack of awareness of these standards and organisations across survey respondents is surprising given the established nature of many schemes. Marginally, the first three organisations (Investors in People (IIP), National Mentoring and Befriending standards – now part of National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) guidelines) appeared to have slightly more impact and influence amongst respondents though the extent of their influence is low.

In open comments related to this question respondents identified three other categories of influencers on their schemes; other professional and formal organisations, other prominent mentoring schemes and lead authors and experts in the field. In relation to other professional organisations examples included; the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) coaching and mentoring qualifications, the NHS Leadership Academy, Academy of Medical Sciences, EA Inclusion, Business in the Arts NW, the Museums Association and Museums and Galleries Scotland, The Royal College of Physicians, British Medical Association and London Deanery and the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Code of ethics. These examples are in addition to those mentioned in section 1.2. The second category of influencers included mentions of; the Bacchus Mentoring, the 30% Club, NHS leadership mentoring, the Princes Trust MOSAIC mentoring and Women in Film and Television (WFTV) schemes. The final category cited Julie Hay and David Clutterbuck, as individuals who write, consult and present on mentoring schemes and had helped shape the respondents' formal mentoring schemes.

In the open question there were over ninety comments regarding the factors influencing the design and operation of formal mentoring schemes. The themes which surfaced ranged from; factors relating to the nature of the context of mentoring, organisational goals, experience and expertise, research and feedback from mentors and mentees and very practical issues. The very practical issues were captured in comments of; *'the time and capacity of the volunteer coordinator'*, and *'Resources available in terms of budget and staffing for the administration of the scheme.'* which reflect the challenges in funding faced by some schemes. The context of mentoring category was reflected in remarks, such as; *'for it to be a professional programme taking into consideration industry's needs and the demands of academic life on the students.'* and *'youth led – guided by the needs of our young people and community'*. For the organisational goals grouping statements included; *'wider university strategic aims'*, *'the needs of our members and the Society's goals'* and *'the requirements of our Institute'*.

Feedback from mentors and mentees was reflected in comments which indicated initial surveys of likely participants and those respondents which used the evaluation of their schemes to continually revise and adapt the design and operation. For example, respondents suggested, *'The needs of our early career members who identified the need for greater career provisions by the XXX in a large survey we undertook back in 2015.'* and *'Research and evaluation ... with our different stakeholders.'*



Finally, the theme of experience and expertise was reflected in comments of; *'I drew the design from previous experience, qualifications in coaching and mentoring and research about mentoring programmes'* and *'lived experiences of the issues and my professional coaching background.'* This section suggests that while professional organisations which have developed frameworks, resources and benchmarks for mentoring schemes may not have substantial influence in mentoring scheme design and delivery, mentoring scheme coordinators are committed to using a range of other factors deemed relevant to their scheme's purpose to inform their design and operation.

## 2.6 Governance and Administration of Formal Mentoring Schemes

Several survey questions aimed to delve into the way formal mentoring schemes are governed and administered, specifically respondents were asked to comment upon; whether they had a steering committee to support governance and management, a mentoring champion to promote the scheme and their reliance on different forms of administration options to successfully deliver their mentoring scheme. Just over half of all respondents (52%) said they did not have a steering committee of any kind to support scheme governance, however, in the more than forty comments in the open section of this question, further elaboration was offered.

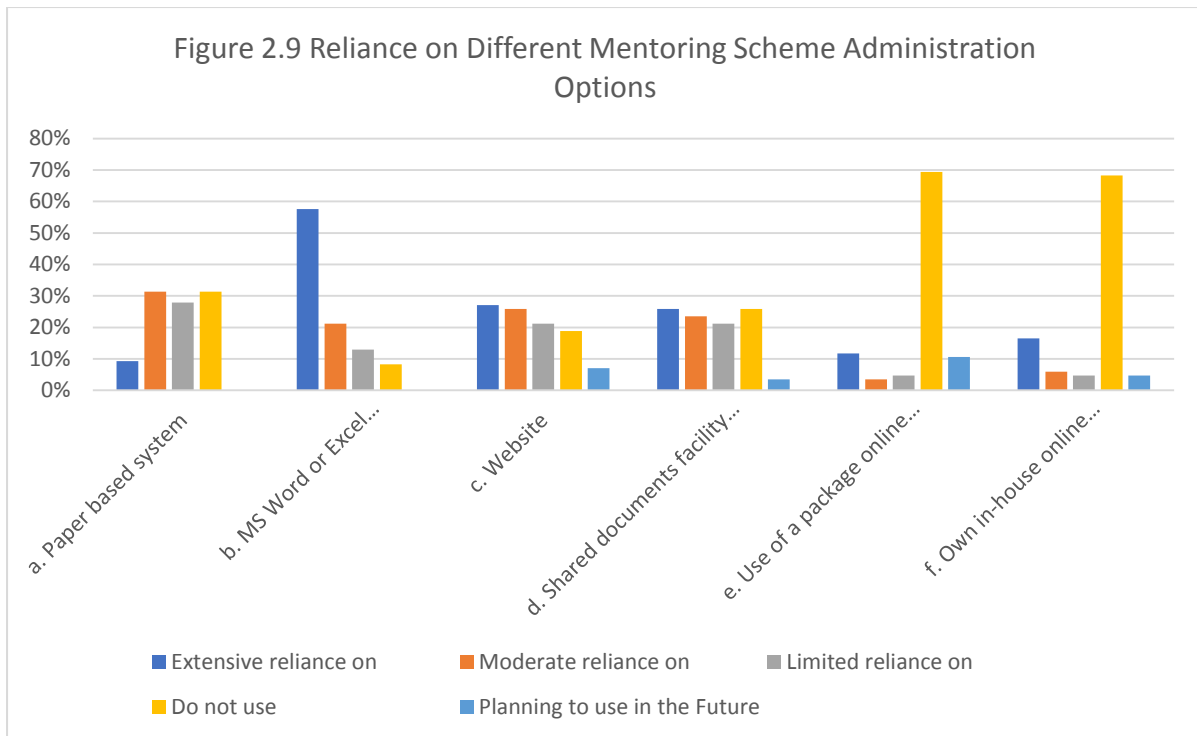
Steering committees appeared to derive from existing senior committees which focused every quarter or twice a year on mentoring scheme issues specifically or working groups focused on the mentoring scheme which bring in expertise as and when needed. Expertise mentioned here included the Head of the Diversity and Equality Unit, learning consultants and training experts and board members with relevant professional knowledge. Both versions of these steering committees included mentions of very senior members, such as Education Secretary, the Pro Vice Chancellor, Alumni Director, Trustees and Managing Director. These results demonstrate that formal mentoring schemes are often supported by those with experience, from senior positions and with specific expertise in relevant areas. Comments regarding the lack of a steering committee related to intentions to set one up, or the alternative ways mentoring schemes seek ongoing support. Examples included; *'No steering committee but the scheme is monitored through the senior management team'* and *'it's part of our wider diversity and inclusivity steering committee'* and *'we consult with an advisory group on several matters and mentoring is one'*.

The value of having senior experience expertise and support through sponsors and champions of mentoring (and coaching) initiatives has been mentioned in the literature (Clutterbuck, Megginson & Bajer, 2016), however, little empirical research has been evident on this area. The responses to the question regarding a champion were interesting in that about half of all respondents (about 60 in the case of this question) said their scheme did not have a mentoring champion, often with the caveat, *'it's me'*.

Where champions were identified there were still about twenty percent of respondents classifying themselves as the main scheme champion. However, other champions took the form of examples like; Chief Operating Officer, Pro Vice Chancellor, The Trust Chair, Head of Inclusion, the Deputy Minister, high profile founders and alumni, the Dean of the School, the Head of Education, national and branch chairs and the whole academic team. The champion role was seen to be about promoting and advocating schemes and providing a sounding board to mentoring scheme coordinators.

The question on the administration of formal mentoring schemes aimed to gauge the level of systemisation of data management and coordination used. Results from this question are captured in Figure 2.9. Formal mentoring schemes often collect a great deal of data on participants and managing this data securely and communicating easily with participants can be challenging for scheme coordinators. Several respondents were concerned about their GDPR responsibilities and had faced challenges in being compliant with these regulations.

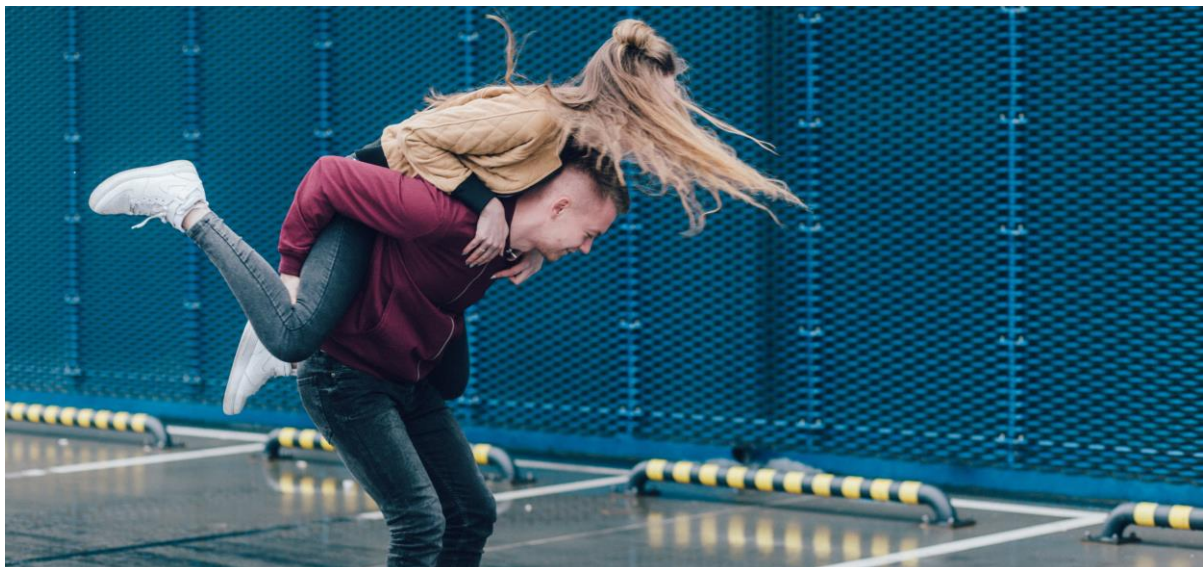
Over half of all respondents were extensively reliant on Word and Excel packages to organise mentoring scheme data with just over a quarter of schemes also being extensively reliant on websites and shared document facilities (such as GoogleDrive or OneDrive) too. There was limited use of online packages whether these were in-house systems or those purchased as specific online mentoring systems. Comments around this question mentioned the recognition of the need to move to specially designed mentoring systems but uncertainty over what was needed, and the costs concerned.

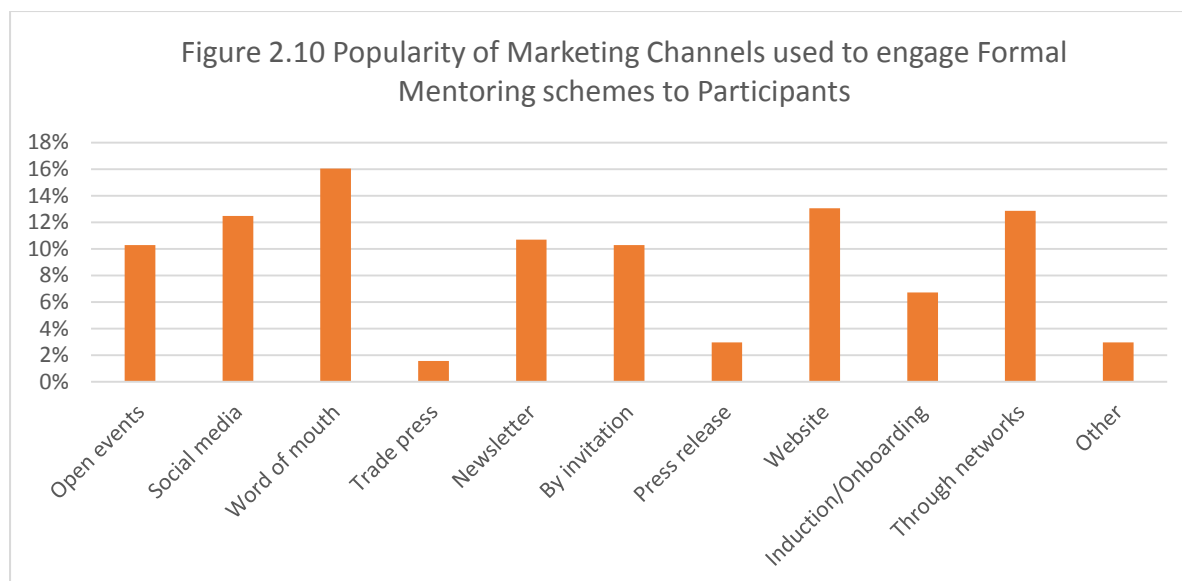


## 2.7 Matching and Marketing to Mentors and Mentees in Formal Mentoring Schemes

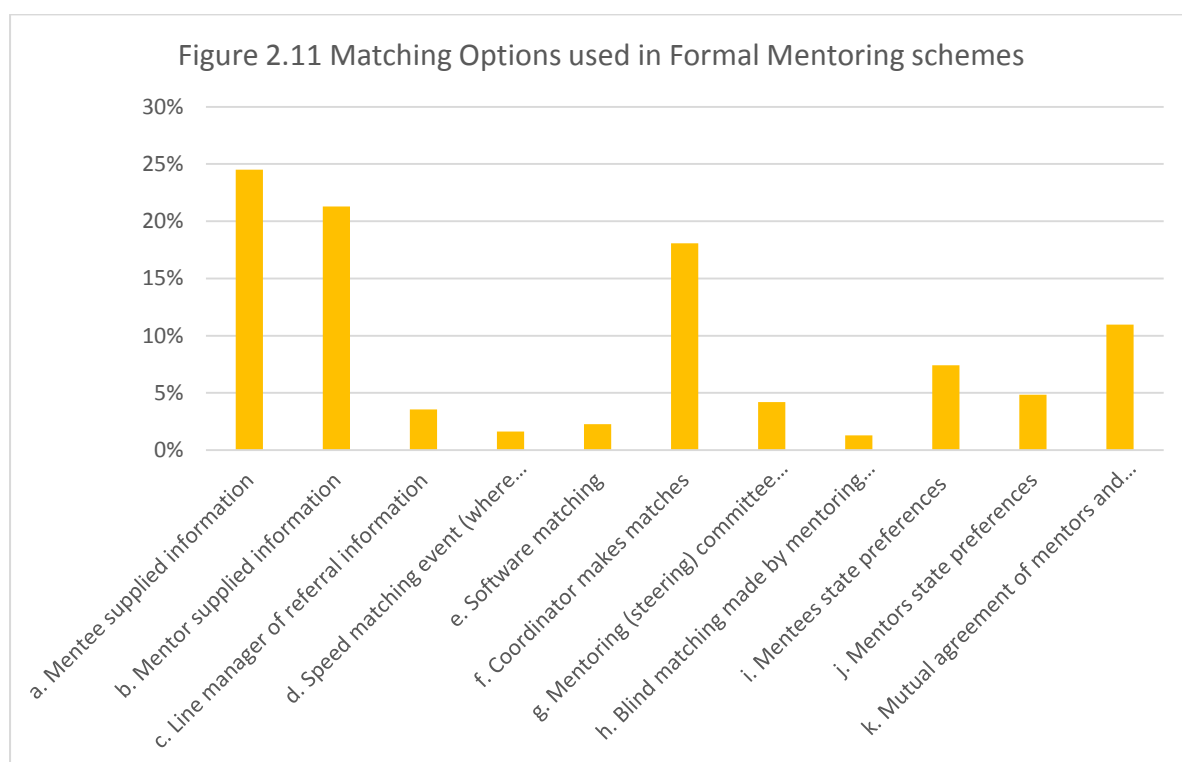
This group of questions targeted how mentors and mentees were engaged in formal mentoring schemes and matched as learning partners. Several sources have identified the challenges of managing mentoring participants where relationships are forged on the basis of voluntary involvement. The range of responses to this question reinforce the diversity of schemes where some were internal to organisational settings and others crossed organisational and sector boundaries. Figure 2.10 captures the breadth of particularly marketing channels with word of mouth, websites, networks and social media identified as the most popular.

Seldom were schemes reliant on one marketing channel though for some smaller schemes marketing was limited due to the restricted capacity of schemes. For some schemes mention was made of the focus being on marketing to either mentors or mentees, with one group of participants seen as easier to engage. In the other category comments were related to schemes where mentoring scheme participation was limited to those on specific leadership or talent development programmes, identified through educational or engagement profiles or via referrals from specialists (child services professionals or tutors).





Matching is a highly provocative topic within formal mentoring schemes and the literature has deliberated about the virtues of matching based on preferences and characteristics (Wycherley & Cox, 2008; Menges, 2016; Raposa et al., 2019). In Figure 2.11 the range of matching options are identified and the extent of their use by the respondents' schemes.



Respondents could tick as many options as applied to their schemes with the most prevalent combination being a, b and f. Matching practices often reflected size of mentoring schemes with some respondents' comments mentioning searches for suitable mentors based on detailed insights into mentees' needs. For schemes that used software for matching there was often a 'double check' by the mentoring scheme coordinator and others about the suitability of matches. The human touch was felt to be important and was communicated to mentees and mentors to support engagement. This is exemplified in comments such as; *'Software matching provides options but final decision made by co-ordinator'* and *'Options presented to mentees when possible. Colleagues who refer help to confirm suitability of a proposed match.'*

Respondents to the open survey questions recognised the contentious nature of matching and the semi-structured interviews gave further insights into the challenges of matching. There were over eighty comments regarding matching practices and experiences of how matching issues are tackled. Comments identified practices *'The Coordinator/Project Manager works with the group to resolve it; with the group merging or separating in some case.'* and *'It falls to the Manager, Coordinator and Organisation (when required) some levels of no engagement will be electronically handled via calls, emails and texts.'*

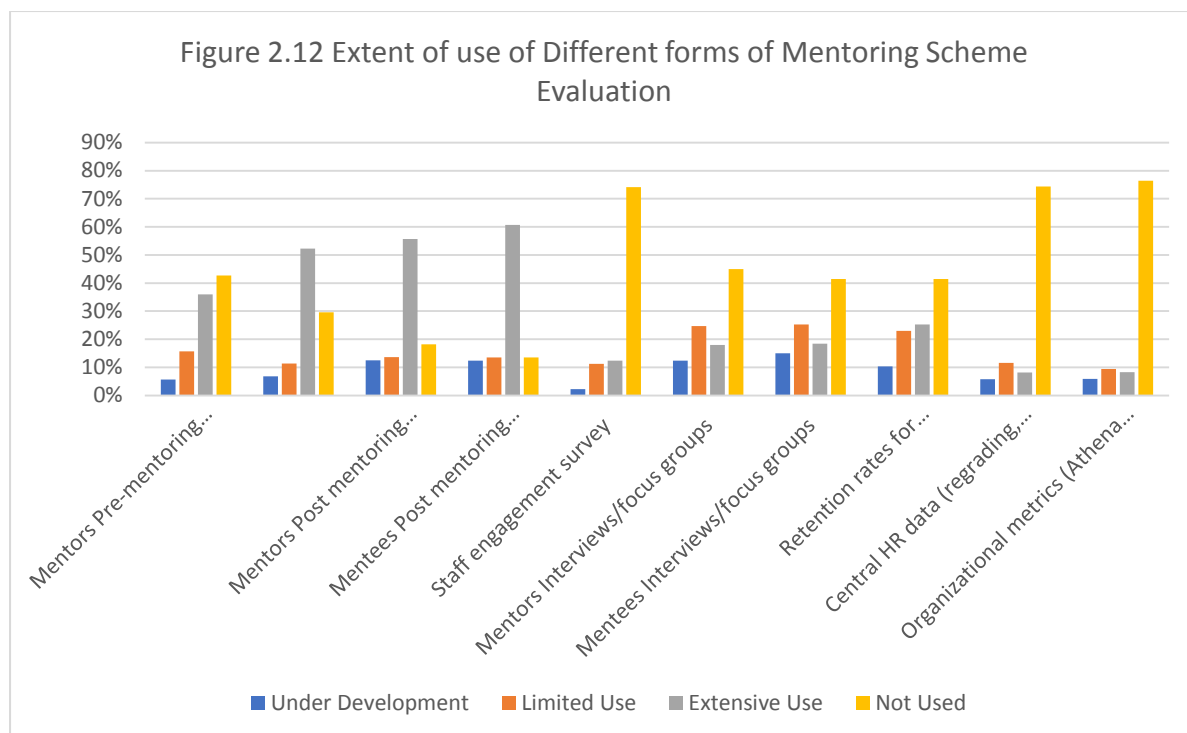
Several respondents mentioned 'no fault divorce clauses' in their mentoring schemes where mentees and mentors could walk away from unsuccessful matches. There was also an interesting divide between schemes who advocated pairings should meet face to face first, to test their chemistry, and those who advocated initial virtual interactions (email/telephone/video technology) ahead of face to face meetings to determine whether the match is likely to work. The significance of mentoring scheme officers, coordinators and managers managing matching issues was resounding, however, and resolving these problems is challenging. Hence some respondents identified additional support from senior specialists including calling on Alumni Directors, Directors of Education, members of the senior management team, Equality and Diversity specialists.

## **2.8 The Evaluation of Formal Mentoring Schemes**

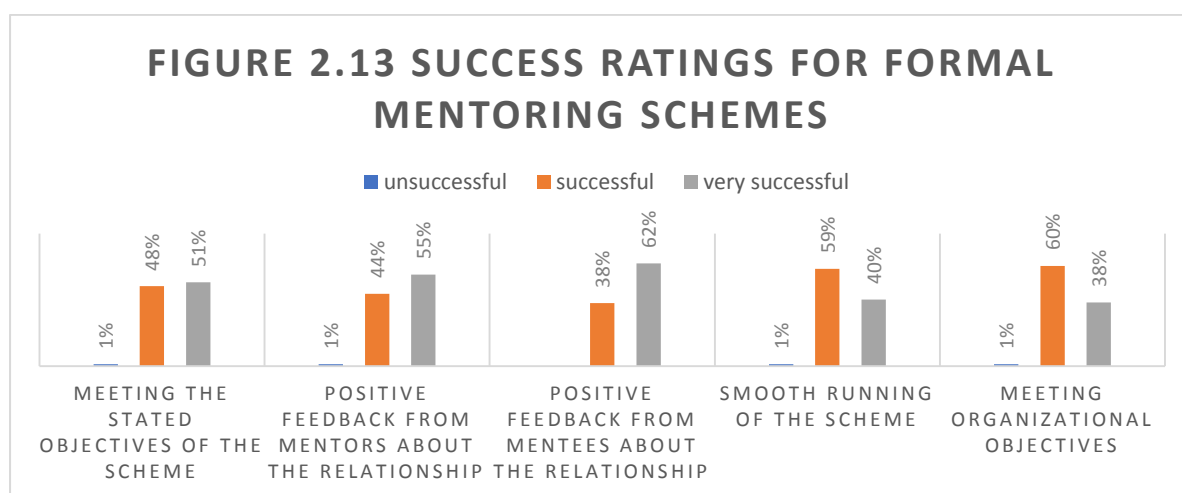
Evaluation is recognised as a valuable part of mentoring scheme management in that it enables the success of specific mentoring relationships as well as the broader goals and purpose of schemes to be assessed. Merrick (2017) notes the paucity of research around the evaluation of schemes largely because of the apparent challenges of the factors associated with measuring scheme and relationship outcomes.

The results from this survey point to recognition by respondents that evaluating mentoring relationship outcomes are prioritised in formal mentoring scheme evaluation. Figure 2.12 highlights the extensive use of post mentoring questionnaires with mentors and mentees, and slightly less extensive use of pre-mentoring questionnaires with both groups. The use of broader measures including; organisational metrics, staff engagement surveys, retention rates and central HR data were less likely to be used but this may be due to the nature of many of the schemes participating in the study. Where schemes are taking place across organisational and sector boundaries, for example professional associations and workplaces or those interested in the arts and professional artists, organisational measures are not readily recognisable or relevant.

While quantitative insights are gleaned from questionnaire data, and may be valuable for broad overviews of schemes, in particular where there were requirements to report to stakeholders and sponsors, several respondents felt they had limits. Many respondents mentioned their concerns with purely quantitative data and the risks of losing rich insights and stories into the value and meaning of mentoring relationships to participants. Collecting qualitative data, captured through interviews and focus groups was recognised as highly beneficial but side-lined as time-consuming by under-resourced (time and funding) coordinators.



In an attempt to understand more about evaluation and success ratings of schemes the survey asked respondents to rate the success of their schemes in relation to various statements. Respondents rated their schemes as 'very successful' rather than 'successful' on three out of the five statements. Their confidence in rating their schemes as 'very successful' can be seen to be related to results displayed in Figure 2.12 where evaluations are based on mentee and mentor feedback and meeting the stated objectives of the scheme. However, for statements regarding the smooth running of their schemes and meeting broader organisational objectives, ratings of 'successful' rather than 'very successful' were evident. There is a suggestion here that coordinators prioritise gaining insights from participants at the possible expense of reviewing their own operating efficiencies or the challenges of ascertaining organisational impact.



## 2.9 Challenges and Difficulties associated with Formal Mentoring Schemes

The open comments question on the challenges and difficulties experienced when managing formal mentoring schemes elicited just over one hundred comments. Several respondents provided long explanations of the challenges they face, others left short succinct comments; '*funding*', '*time*' and '*matching*' were particularly prevalent topics mentioned here. Across the statements made, three main themes emerged which sub-divided into secondary themes. The three main themes related to; Issues related to participants (sub-divided into 'Mentors as Volunteers', 'Participant expectations' and 'Young



people'), Scheme practices and processes (sub-divided into 'Matching', 'Engagement and Momentum', 'Balancing supply and demand', 'Systems' and 'Evaluation') and finally, an Overarching theme (sub-divided into 'Volume of work', 'Time', 'Funding and Resourcing' and 'Senior management support and recognition'.

The first theme derived from comments regarding frustrations with managing volunteers and more specifically how mentors were often unable to keep commitments to mentees and the schemes. Comments such as *'Mentors being volunteers can lead to unreliability due to their other commitments'* or *'Mentors don't have time to do all the admin.'* In relation to the sub-theme of 'Participant expectations' respondents identified that mentees, and sometimes also mentors, had unrealistic expectations of mentoring relationships and this led to faults in relationships and additional work for scheme coordinators. Finally, the specific sub-theme of 'Young people' appeared and related to the very troubled nature of some youth participating in mentoring schemes. Comments such as; *'Working with vulnerable young people who need lots of support'* and *'Working with vulnerable young people with complex backgrounds (mental health and addiction issues).'*

The second theme of 'Scheme practices and processes' highlighted many respondents' persistent worries over securing suitable matches, despite very careful matching activities and sustained communication with mentoring pairs. Comments such as; *'Personality mismatches'* and *'lack of resources to do matching thoroughly and well'*. Another sub-theme pointed to the problem of continually ensuring 'Engagement and Momentum' in mentoring relationships, with comments such as; *'Some mentees not wanting to engage with Mentors as they feel they have enough support, is frustrating.'* and *'Lack of participation ... this takes a lot of time to monitor and encourage – once the relationships flourish then this problem tends to go away'*. Other sub-themes in this area related to 'Balancing supply and demand' of mentors and mentees, sometimes this issue was about recruiting the right number of mentors for mentees on the scheme and at other times it was focused on securing mentors with specific characteristics, *'There is a limited number of mentors in some areas of the country'* or *'There is a lack of women volunteering to be mentors.'* Finally, two other sub-themes emerged related to 'Systems' which support mentoring schemes and the 'Evaluation' of schemes. Challenges in these sub-themes related to systems which were purchased for other parts of an organisation and did not deliver for the respondent's own mentoring scheme and how to effectively manage the evaluation of mentoring relationships and schemes. This is captured in comments such as; *'Evaluation is always a problem. Sometimes people just don't complete the evaluations.'*

The final main 'Overarching' theme reinforced some of the issues emerging elsewhere in these results, namely the 'Volume of work' involved in managing formal mentoring schemes, the specific 'Time' commitments for scheme delivery, challenges in terms of adequate 'Funding and Resourcing' and 'Senior management support and recognition'. Comments related to these sub-themes included; *'Administration is the most time consuming element – getting and managing all the necessary information.'* and *'Finding time to do everything and continually communicate.'* and *'The lack of resources to facilitate and deliver the scheme'* and *'Securing buy in from senior management on the long term value of mentoring.'*

## **2.10 Summary of Theme 2: The Practicalities of Formal Mentoring Schemes**

This section highlights the key practical features of formal mentoring schemes. Dyadic mentoring is still the predominant format with other versions of mentoring more likely to support this traditional version of mentoring. Mentoring schemes themselves range from highly structured and formulated to those with more limited infrastructure and guidance. Typical features include guidance and briefing of mentors, and often mentees too.

Great emphasis is placed on managing expectations through recruitment materials, briefing documentation and training, and coordinators seem to pay particular attention to the matching of mentors and mentees. In order to engage and maintain momentum in mentoring relationships many scheme coordinators devote a significant amount of time to communicating with participants and nurturing their interactions. The average frequency of mentoring interactions is monthly, so monitoring appears to revolve around bi-monthly interactions. Some schemes appear to also be keen to build more of a community of practice by organising events for their mentors, and mentees, which suggests there is some movement towards Murphy and Kram's (2014) argument for an evolution of mentoring into developmental networks.

While respondents were relatively unaware of some of the main proponents of standards, guidance and resources for mentoring schemes there was considerable evidence that good practice was a concern in delivering effective mentoring schemes. Respondents used other schemes, their own research and qualifications and expertise from elsewhere to help them design and operate their mentoring schemes though there were requests for further support and opportunities to learn from other schemes too.

Almost half of schemes have support from a steering committee and, or a mentoring scheme champion. For many schemes these are high profile individuals or groups who act as a sounding board and promotor of formal mentoring, however, several respondents noted that they were the champion for their own scheme with limited extra support provided. Scheme administration options reflect the diversity of scheme size with technology used to some extent to manage the participants' and matches data at the heart of schemes. Several schemes were considering further use of mentoring systems but were uncertain of their needs and funding to justify such moves.

The issues of matching and recruitment reinforce the challenges respondents face in managing schemes where data and expectations need to be managed and communicated in supportive ways to give relationships the best grounds for success. Evaluation was a feature of most schemes and the focus was very much placed on measuring success in relation to mentoring relationships and the goals of scheme rather than purposively appraising the running of schemes and meeting broader organisational or social groups. Balancing types of feedback to report on scheme evaluations was noted as problematic by some respondents where their focus was on nurturing relationships rather than capturing quantitative and qualitative insights on mentoring experiences and or following up on long term outcomes. The challenges and difficulties faced reinforce the issues suggested in the first theme specifically related to funding and in the second theme focus on the volume of work associated with managing schemes and the supporting participants right through their journey.





## Theme 3: People - Who Orchestrates Formal Mentoring Schemes?

This final theme; People, focuses upon the individuals and groups who orchestrate formal mentoring initiatives and explores the role of the mentoring scheme coordinator, the background characteristics of coordinators and their experiences of being involved in formal mentoring scheme design, development and operations. We have purposively used the term orchestrate to capture the range of tasks coordinators perform and reflect their part in creating the spaces where mentoring participants come together and the nurturing of those relationships. We have also been able to draw more clearly on the interviews conducted with mentoring scheme coordinators in this theme.

### 3.1 The Role of the Mentoring Scheme Coordinator

Gaining an understanding of how formal mentoring schemes operate involved asking respondents to explain how many people worked on their scheme, the roles allocated to them, any departmental affiliations, whether their role was full-time or part-time, and the formality of their role. The results indicate that operating a formal mentoring scheme depends primarily on part-time staff or volunteers than full-time staff/ volunteers, by a ratio of 2 to 1. The number of people involved varied tremendously depending on the size of schemes, with some national schemes having up to 60 part-time coordinators spread across the country. The majority of schemes functioned on one part-time worker/volunteer. Further nuance in this area of how many people does it take to operate a formal mentoring scheme is evident where respondents were asked about the percentage of their time they devoted to the role. Two-thirds of respondents identified that their mentoring scheme management was combined with other roles, as trainers, researchers, administrators, teachers, social, youth and children's services professionals and other specialists. The average time spent on the mentoring scheme coordination was between 10-50% for those combining this role with other responsibilities, in full or part-time employment.

Another survey question asked whether the role of mentoring scheme coordinator was part of formal employment and two-thirds of responses suggested this was the case. This proportion of employees to volunteers also fits with the other comments regarding the results where mentoring scheme coordination was recognised as a form of volunteering, but the two could be mixed together. Comments highlight the muddled nature of volunteering and formal employment here. Statements included; *'As a consultant I am paid for the specific training sessions, but the considerable amount of coordination and promotion work is not paid.'* and *'We donate 15 hours a month as directors and are paid an hourly rate for work done after that.'* Other comments included, *'This is a voluntary position on our committee'*, *'No reward for this it's all about giving back'* and *'I run this in my work time alongside my normal work and without specific reward for it, so this bit is voluntary'*. The blurred nature meant there were frequent mentions of mentoring scheme coordinators as freelancers from learning and development, human resources, equality, and diversity and inclusion, as well as administrators or professionals in a variety of different fields (education, social services, universities).

When asked about their job titles a wide variety of examples arose from respondents including; Associate Director of Mentoring, Scheme Coordinator, Programmes Manager, Project Coordinator, Professional Development Advisor, Head of Talent, Mentor Tutor, National Mentoring Lead, Fellowships, Administrator, Careers Consultant, Head of External Partnerships, Alumni Mentoring Coordinator, Learning and Development Business Partner, Deputy Director of People, and Membership Secretary. These results capture some of the variety in how the role of mentoring scheme coordinator is packaged and depicted through job title and the range of suggested experience and authority.

We also asked respondents to explain who they reported to in relation to their formal mentoring scheme responsibilities. We know from section 2.6 that formal mentoring schemes may be supported by champions who promote, advocate and defend schemes and committees who act as sounding boards and oversee the governance of mentoring schemes. Again a range of answers here reflect the way formal mentoring schemes may be high profile or very much under the radar. About half of responses identified they report directly to what might be termed as senior individuals such as; the CEO, the charity's founder, the Chair of the Board, the Head of External Affairs, the Vice President of HR, Director of People Management, the senior management team, the alumni committee and the Head of Member Engagement.

The other half of the respondents identified line managers as just that, line managers, without specific insights so it was difficult to determine whether these were senior people or not. A few responses also mentioned they had no one to report to as such. More specific insights included comments of; *'My line manager is the Lead Employability and Careers Practitioner and her manager is the Deputy Director of Careers, and we will discuss any major developments together.'* and *'I report to an Executive Group quarterly and there is an independent chair who oversees whether the delivery of my contract is on target and budget.'* and *'I report to our senior management team, which comprises all company associate directors of which I am the most senior.'*

While studies (Bhide, 2017) have identified that their mentoring scheme coordinators were associated with specific departments the results from this investigation indicate a wider range of departmental affiliation, similar to the work of Abbott and colleagues (Abbott et al., 2010). While human resources, organisational development, learning and development, talent and equality, diversity and inclusion were mentioned, others included adoption services, university departments, careers services, operations, youth work services, membership support teams, student experience and engagement teams and children's services.

### **3.2 Mentoring Scheme Coordinators Involvement with Formal Mentoring Schemes**

We were keen to understand more about respondents' association with their formal mentoring schemes and asked respondents about their roles in the development of schemes, their length of service and how they became involved. In relation to their length of service in their current roles we found that 20 percent of respondents had been in post for less than a year, 36 percent had been involved in their current mentoring scheme for between one year and less than three years. The percentage of those involved in their scheme for between three and five years was 17 percent, while 27 percent had engaged with their current scheme for over five years. These figures suggest a relatively stable level of engagement with formal mentoring schemes though some respondents did identify caveats of breaks due to maternity leave, sabbaticals and periods when schemes did not run.

When asked what role respondents had played in the development of their current formal mentoring scheme this open comments question elicited three forms of response; those that highlighted engagement from the initiation of the scheme, those that identified changes made and finally, comments which reflected both these aspects of development. Over half of the respondents to this question suggested they had been involved with the scheme from the beginning though not necessarily as scheme coordinator but as advisers. For example, one respondent stated, *'I started volunteering for this charity training mentors, and after three years joined full-time and redesigned our mentoring programme to allow us to scale our work and support more young people.'* While other respondents suggested, *'I designed and developed the entire programme from the ground up, alongside forecasting and managing the budget, staffing and all required resources.'* Those who joined schemes after their initial launch often focused on specific ways they had supported the development of their schemes, such as; *'I've streamlined it, moved the surveys online and developed questions asked, moved to opening registrations and matching at 2 points in a year.'* These results indicate how formal mentoring schemes evolve and the role coordinators play in those developments and enhancements.

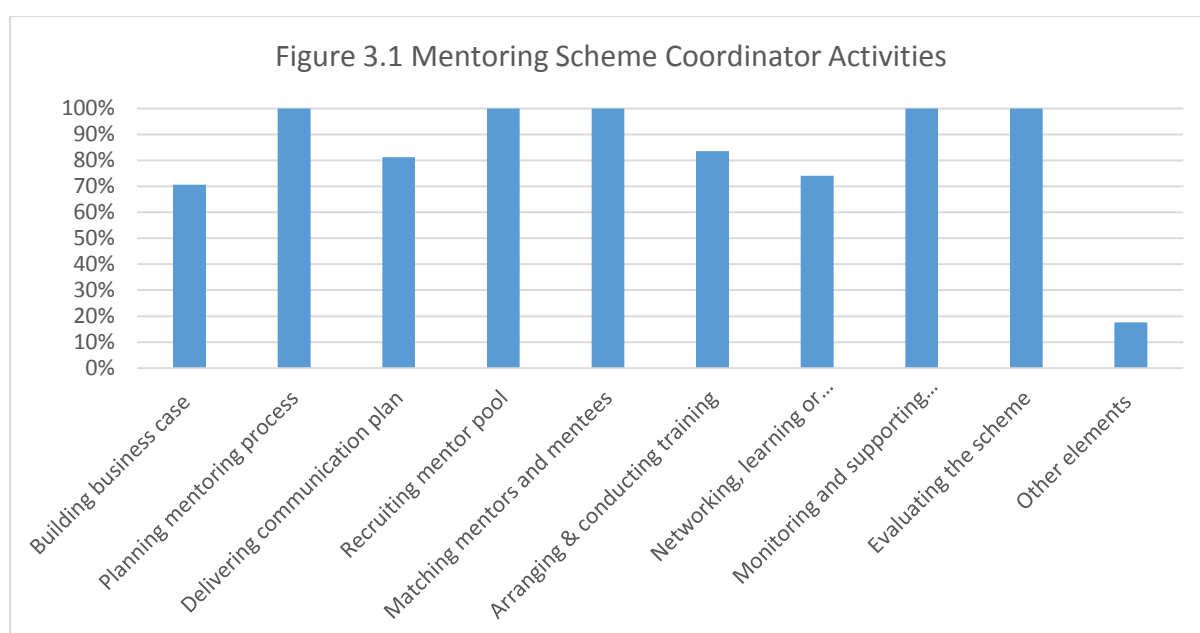
We were also curious about how coordinators became involved in formal mentoring schemes and in another open question respondents provided a range of insights regarding their experiences. While about a third of respondents said they applied for the job and secured it, more nuanced versions also included; *'I was a member of the umbrella network which the mentoring scheme sits under and knew the network's founders. I volunteered to support the mentoring scheme when they announced they were looking for someone to coordinate it.'*

Another quarter of respondents identified that they were volunteers for organisations and coordination roles emerged from initial volunteer activities. Another quarter of respondents identified their expertise and experience led them to becoming involved with schemes, *'I was approached due to my D&I (diversity and inclusivity) lead role.'* Another small percentage suggested their involvement came out of less positive experiences, *'The role came about as a result of a lack of increased funding.'* and *'There was no-one else to do it.'* While most respondents became involved due to their own expertise, passion for the issues or commitment to causes and networks which recognised their interests, a small group were landed with their coordination roles in order for schemes to survive.

### 3.3 What do Mentoring Scheme Coordinators do?

From section 2 we have a strong sense of what is involved in the processes and practices of operating a formal mentoring scheme. The section above also indicates that mentoring scheme coordinators are often involved in the design of schemes as well as day to day operations and development. One question asked respondents about the tasks and activities they undertook and the results, captured in Figure 3.3, reinforce the diversity of activities.

All respondents identified their involvement with planning the mentoring process, recruiting the pool of mentors, matching participants, monitoring and supporting mentoring relationships and evaluating their schemes. Over 70 percent of all respondents said they were also involved in building the business case for mentoring, delivering the communication plan, arranging and conducting training for participants and organising and delivering networking, learning and conference events for their schemes. The other category prompted respondents to mention; making discretionary payments to participants, trouble shooting, managing finances and bidding for funding, dealing with safeguarding issues and offering reflection and supervision to mentors and mentees.



We also asked respondents to identify the three main skills required to successfully coordinate a formal mentoring scheme. Table 3.1 captures the four most popular responses with the first skills area identifying organisational, communication, mentoring and coaching and leadership skills as paramount. There was a shift in focus in the second main skills nominated by respondents, so although organisational and communication skills were mentioned, time management, people and social skills, empathy and listening skills were selected. Finally, the third skills areas highlighted flexibility, relationship management skills, matching skills and networking ability.

When discussing skills with the interviewees the value of what might be termed general organisational and interpersonal skills was also apparent, however, the people dimension to coordinating formal mentoring schemes was also a very strong feature. Similar to the three main skills areas reflected here one interviewee echoed the responses of others by saying, *'You need to setup the structure, the guidelines ... but it's a human process, so it's human chemistry (too).'* (Interviewee RQ).

**Table 3.1 Top Three Main Skills areas for Mentoring Scheme Coordinators**

Skills area 1	Skills area 2	Skills area 3
Organisational skills	Time management	Flexibility
Communication skills	People/social skills	Relationship management skills
Mentoring and coaching knowledge and skills	Empathy	Matching skills and knowledge
Leadership	Listening skills	Networking skills

When asked about training received as part of their mentoring scheme coordination roles only twenty percent said they had received training. Specific training courses which were mentioned in the open comments section for this question identified courses attended with the Princes Trust, National Council for Volunteer Organisations, NHS leadership academy, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, ILM Coaching and Mentoring qualifications and academic qualifications and training courses at Oxford Brookes University, Henley Management College (Reading University) and the University of Warwick. Several respondents also commented on how their predecessors or mentors themselves, supported their development as scheme coordinators and the value of working with others in the field. One interviewee (AS) reflecting on his own experiences and challenges of scheme coordination stated, *'I think everybody, mentors especially, we recruit to the project, I learn from.'*

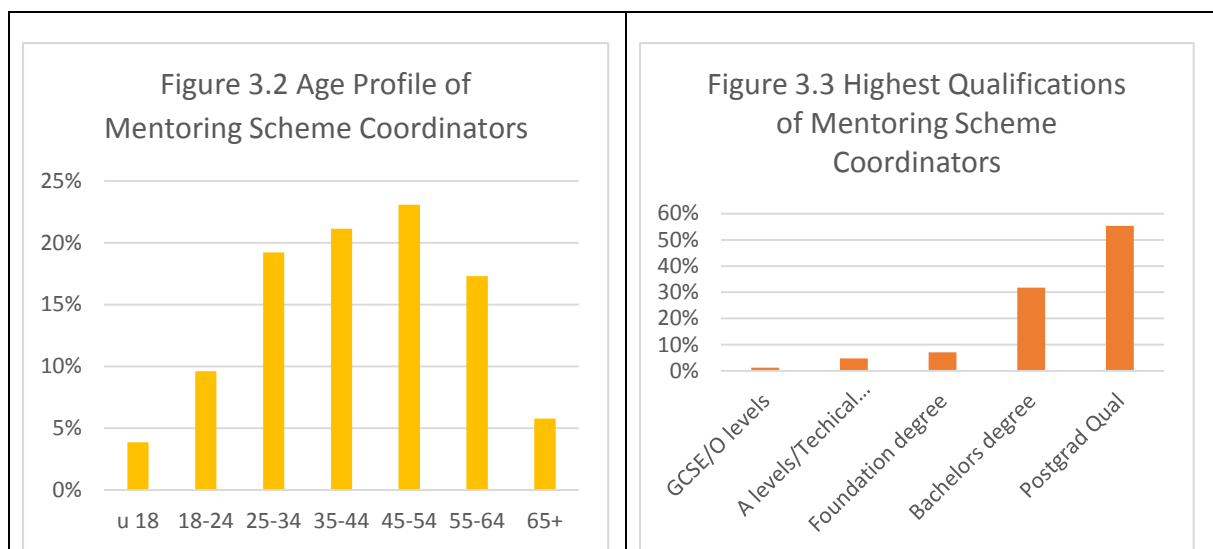
However, when we asked whether mentoring scheme coordinators networked with other coordinators the results were mixed with only 40 percent agreeing that networking to share good practice and resolve problems took place. The open comment section of this question prompted lots of comments, some naming the networks they used and others requesting ideas for networking opportunities and the value they felt networking might accrue. Networks referred to included; 'The AGCAS Task Group', 'CIPD events', the NEON (North of England Peer Learning Network), the Growth company, STAMINA Mentoring Network and the Girls Network, and some respondents identified networking opportunities within their own organisations.

Interest in developing networking opportunities included comments of *'I would be very keen to network with others.'* and *'There are limited opportunities to network in this region. It would be helpful though.'* The appeal of networking with other scheme coordinators was not felt across all respondents and some sectors, those in education, for example, seemed to have useful networks already in place but for others exploring shared interests was greeted enthusiastically and this was borne out in the interviews. Reflecting the feelings of other interviewees and respondents, one interviewee commented, *'We need a way of talking to each other, we need a community of practice for mentoring scheme coordinators.'* (Interviewee RI).

### **3.4 Unsung Heroines and Heroes - Who are Mentoring Scheme Coordinators**

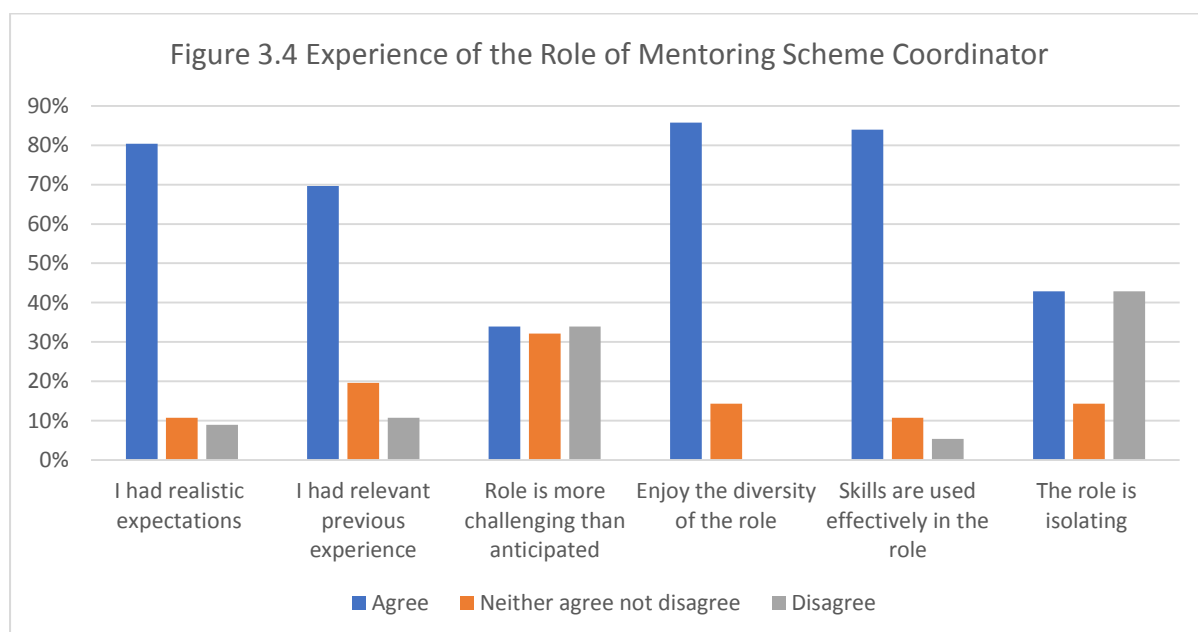
We were also interested in gaining a better understanding of the characteristics of mentoring scheme coordinators and found that over 70 percent were female and 27 percent male, with a small number of respondents preferring not to say. This profile would fit with the higher number of women in human resources, learning and development, and care and public services occupations. Figure 3.2 identifies the age range of the mentoring scheme coordinators who responded to the survey and suggests that scheme coordination may be undertaken by younger individuals as well as those who may be more mature and have more professional experience.

Figure 3.3 identifies the highest qualification of mentoring scheme coordinators responding to the study and highlights that significant educational learning is typical for coordinators, with over 80 percent of respondents holding degree level and above qualifications. The level of qualifications held by respondents is also reinforced in the open question that asked about professional qualifications. Again the variety of expertise and backgrounds was clearly evident with mentions of; CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Management), ILM, EMCC, Faculty of Public Health, Chartered Institute of Management, ICF and Associate Fellow of Higher Education Academy.



### 3.5 Insights and Experiences of being a Mentoring Scheme Coordinator

Finally, we asked coordinators to reflect on the nature of their roles with formal mentoring schemes and Figure 3.4 highlights respondents' views, with significant proportions of coordinators reporting they had realistic expectations of their roles, appropriate previous experience, that they enjoy the diversity of the role and that their skills are used effectively.



There were, however, stark contrasts in responses regarding whether the mentoring scheme coordination role is more challenging than anticipated and whether the role is isolating. Our semi-structured interview responses were revealing here as over half of the twenty-five interview participants talked about experiences of loneliness or isolation and overload at some points. This was succinctly stated as; *'You get frustration with numbers and targets and inhouse politics but then you speak to a mentor or young person and it outweighs it every time'* by one interviewee' (Interviewee AS).

In open response questions we also asked what the frustrations and satisfactions were, in relation to their coordinators' roles and Table 3.2 identifies the four most common issues which frustrated and satisfied respondents. There were over ninety comments for each of these questions which reflect the interest and passion coordinators have for mentoring schemes. Notable insights in relation to frustrations included; *'Lack of resources. It underpins most other frustrations and a lack of strategic*



*driver for endorsement of the scheme.'* and *'How volatile some relationships can be (mental health of mentees is a big issue)'*, while another respondent stated, *'Noting – it's a dream job – I'm very lucky.'*

Comments capturing causes of satisfaction included, *'Bringing people together who would not otherwise have the opportunity to meet and learn from each other; the outcomes over time; to have someone tell you 10 years later that it was one of the most powerful learning experiences they ever had.'* and *'I see first-hand the real benefit that these very diverse relationships have for both parties. It absolutely has to be a two way thing! We have some long standing exceptional partnerships!'*

**Table 3.2 Causes of Frustration and Satisfaction for Mentoring Scheme Coordinators**

Causes of Frustration	Causes of Satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of engagement and unreliability of mentees (and some mentors)</li> <li>• Funding concerns and uncertainty</li> <li>• Lack of senior management recognition and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a difference to people's lives</li> <li>• Providing opportunities not otherwise available</li> <li>• The variety of the role</li> </ul>

### 3.6 Summary of Theme 3: People – Who Orchestrates Formal Mentoring Schemes

This section has addressed the omission in the academic literature of who mentoring scheme coordinators are, the nature of the roles they fulfil and their experiences of formal scheme coordination. We now have empirical evidence on mentoring scheme coordinators and are able to identify them as qualified and dedicated professionals dealing with a complex variety of issues from scheme design, strategic issues about scheme direction and funding, networking and recruiting participants, dealing with challenging personal issues between partners and nurturing relationships where they face difficulties. At the more routine level they manage data, safeguard participants, identify and deliver training and support resources, promote their schemes and evaluate the relationships between mentors and mentees, as well as how schemes meet their own goals and wider organisational and social ambitions.

While the variety of these roles is rewarding for most respondents there may be issues of isolation and loneliness experienced by coordinators. Yet few resources seem to exist which support coordinators training and networking needs. There is evidence that coordinators can play influential roles in organisations championing causes. They often report to, or at least are able to access senior executives to advocate the power of mentoring but their messages may be lost where their limited resources and time are focused upon nurturing their schemes and participants.



## Conclusions

### Our main insights and conclusions

This research offers evidence-based insights into formal mentoring schemes and their management. It is clear that formal mentoring schemes are tackling some of society's most intractable issues, mainly around remedying disadvantage and nurturing development. Formal mentoring schemes have become opportunities for mentees from diverse backgrounds to be supported by, and learn with, mentors with a range of different levels of insights and expertise. Formal mentoring schemes create the processes, practices and space for formal mentoring interactions to take place, be nurtured, flourish and be evaluated. The coordinators who manage formal mentoring schemes play critical roles in bringing mentors and mentees together, guiding and fostering their interactions and capturing the learning which takes place. This research helps us understand the juggling that scheme coordinators do, from simultaneously nurturing individual relationships whilst garnering senior, and often external, support and funding for the sustainability of their schemes; to the routine management of personal data and analysis and commissioning training of scheme participants.

The knowledge from this study reinforces the need to recognise and value the contributions formal mentoring makes across a range of settings and sectors, and the work done to sustain schemes. These insights also develop our understanding of the relevance and variety of formal mentoring schemes and offers evidence for the core features of their practices and processes. This research confronts those who have dismissed formal mentoring, and formal mentoring schemes, and challenges our conceptions of what the part and value of formal mentoring is in human development and fair societies. There is now evidence that formal mentoring schemes create important personal learning spaces which impact upon individuals' lives, as mentees, mentors, and other stakeholders. However, there are also important assertions here about the wider value pertaining to formal mentoring schemes where substantial human and social capital is generated and cultivated in the support, guidance and training provided by schemes but then deployed more widely by mentors and mentees in other aspects of their lives. Our previous in-depth case study or sector-based analysis of formal mentoring schemes offered some useful insights but has hindered our realisation of the wider power and impact of formal mentoring across settings and society in general. The suggestion then emerges that we should be doing more to track and understand formal mentoring and all that it brings to individuals, organisations and society.

The three P's (Purpose, Practicalities and People) framework used to structure our findings help us understand more about formal mentoring schemes and bring about our main conclusions.

### Purpose

We are clear about the value of the stated purpose of formal mentoring schemes and the way these drive scheme champions, coordinators and participants to engage with mentoring. The diversity in the purposes stated by respondents highlights the complexity of the issues formal mentoring schemes attempt to address and the issues of intersectionality which reverberate and require careful acknowledgement and management. Schemes range widely in size and scope and therefore 'one size fits all solutions' are inappropriate. There is, however, interest in understanding how other schemes 'do it' especially where there are similarities in the characteristics of the individuals, schemes are working with. The resourcing and funding of schemes suggests more attention needs to be paid to securing formal mentoring schemes sustainability and cost efficiency. In many cases, coordinators and steering committees face tensions between devoting time and resources to supporting relationships, capturing and reporting on their value, and seeking ways of improving their operational activities and garnering detailed impact statements of their schemes. Associated with these sustained funding issues are the ways that a reliance upon the work of volunteers shapes how processes and practices are delivered with some coordinators appearing to be comfortable with the management of volunteers and others finding this more challenging. Sharing expertise across different groups of formal mentoring scheme coordinators might go some way to enhancing volunteer management and problem-solving the issues.

### Practicalities

While aspects of the results related to the forms of mentoring adopted indicate that the traditional dyadic version of mentoring prevails it would be remiss of us not to recognise that other forms of mentoring are emerging and augmenting the traditional variant. Technology supports different forms



of mentoring, and likewise reflects our increased everyday use of technology to communicate. The recognition of aspects of reverse mentoring emerging also reflect changes in societal views about how knowledge is shared and how differences in backgrounds can work to foster healthier human relationships, the development of individuals and remedy prejudice. For some formal mentoring schemes there was also a determination to broaden learning from dyadic interactions to build communities or as others have suggested networks or constellations of mentoring relationships (Murphy and Kram, 2014).

We can conclude from other findings that there are significant opportunities to engage mentoring scheme coordinators and champions in the work of professional organisations which have developed mentoring scheme standards, frameworks and resources. Being clearer about formal mentoring schemes' awareness of the perceived value of these organisations' efforts to enhance formal mentoring would be worthwhile. Akin to these aspects are the issues related to the governance of mentoring schemes and the role and value of steering committees. The respondents which worked with steering committees or working groups seemed to value their contributions, specifically as sounding boards for the somewhat isolating mentoring scheme coordinator role. Further insights into the impact of such governance structures as well as the role of mentoring scheme champions seems valuable given these findings. The use of different administrative systems and approaches to evaluation by formal mentoring schemes also indicates that the efficiencies and feedback insights scheme coordinators seek may be being forsaken for expedient reasons. Supporting mentoring scheme coordinators and their supporters to be more strategic in the administration and evaluation choices they make could lead to further enhancement and durability of schemes. Many of the challenges and difficulties identified by respondents reinforce these predicaments of focusing on relationships over systems and practices for mentoring scheme coordinators and reappear in their comments regarding their frustrations.

## People

The people dimension of this study of formal mentoring schemes situates coordinators, very clearly in Clutterbuck's (2006) terms as the heroes of the field. Typically, coordinators are experts in their fields, passionate about the callings of their schemes and skilled jugglers of the routine and strategic activities associated with managing mentoring schemes. For some this is a dream job but for others there is isolation associated with the role and a sense there is too much to do. Providing more support to scheme coordinators themselves is highlighted then as a priority for the field of mentoring schemes studies. Undoubtedly the skills developed as mentoring scheme coordinators have the potential to offer rewarding and fulfilling experiences, which may be akin to those of mentors themselves. Indeed for several respondents the role of mentoring scheme coordinator originated from their activities as mentors within their schemes. We may like to consider whether being a mentoring scheme coordinator is the epitome of self-actualisation for those who are engaged with their cause and have the background to cultivate their networks and juggle the managerial responsibilities of coordination. Whether the mentoring scheme coordination role may be the precursor to senior leadership positions with mentoring scheme champion as part of being a leader is an interesting dimension to consider. Our results suggest that this route would help address many of the inequalities and limitations in development for certain individuals and groups, if this was to be the case. It might also prioritise within formal mentoring schemes a growing keenness to offer training in relation to unconscious bias and dealing with difference.

## Points for Reflection and Next Steps

These sections offer some thoughts and recommendations based upon our conclusions, with suggested improvements in approaches and practices for formal mentoring schemes and research in this area.

### Points for Reflection

This research goes some way to addressing the shift in understanding mentoring, and specifically formal mentoring, and should assist those passionate about remedying disadvantage and supporting development to gain wider recognition and backing. There is however, still much to do in promoting the debate on formal mentoring schemes and their role in our private and public lives. Beyond the personal ways that we might be called on to engage in, or benefit from mentoring we also need to consider how we might advocate formal mentoring in the organisations and communities we are familiar with, and shift some of the burden felt by individuals onto organisational stakeholders. By persuading leaders in organisations of the wider benefits of mentoring, as mentees, mentors, mentoring scheme coordinators and champions we may help further recognise the value of formal mentoring, enhance scheme's operational proficiencies and deliver more mentoring capacity.

While this research offers important insights, like all research, it has its own weaknesses and limitations. Our sampling approach could possibly have missed schemes from some sectors and omitted those without an online presence. Our enthusiasm for capturing the purpose, origins, processes and practices of formal mentoring schemes as well as the specifics and experiences of those who operate schemes meant our survey was long and cumbersome. While it was based upon another study which offered opportunities for comparability, the survey tired respondents which undoubtedly led to the skipping of questions and, consequently, a less than complete data set. Rectifying these research methodological issues would be a priority in future research where more focused, issue-based investigations on formal mentoring schemes may improve the quality of data sets and overall insights. We have at least achieved our aim though of remedying the deficit evidence base on formal mentoring schemes, and as such offer a unique contribution which can be built upon.

### Next Steps

Our suggested 'next steps' for developing formal mentoring schemes and their coordination are as follows:

- Build relevant resources, training and networking opportunities for mentoring scheme coordinators through the STAMINA Mentoring Network based on insights from this study. Our podcast series (The Doctors of Mentoring) will be launched in the coming months and continue to assemble useful materials and guidance via the STAMINA Mentoring Network. We recognise there are challenges here as it will be difficult to ensure these are sustainable, flexible and cost-effective for pressurised, time-poor coordinators. Ideas on securing moderate contributions to continue this effort need to be considered and relevant sponsors sought.
- The STAMINA Mentoring Network can act as a hub and conduit for other professional organisations which have developed resources for formal mentoring schemes. For example, guiding scheme coordinators towards the standards and benchmarks, which may gain wider recognition for their work and help secure their long-term success. Steering scheme coordinators to understand their technology needs and building sources which help them determine the relevance of online support packages may also be appropriate.
- Capture more in-depth insights from formal mentoring schemes to help recognise the value of formal mentoring relationships and ways that schemes supply these learning and development opportunities. These will help others relate to formal mentoring across different sectors.
- Raise the visibility of formal mentoring schemes and the work of their coordinators to encourage participation in schemes alongside offering better awareness and realistic

expectations amongst mentoring scheme participants and the immediate and longer-term benefits participation offers to our lives and society.

- Continue to undertake research on formal mentoring schemes and chart the trends in schemes' stated purpose, their funding challenges, the forms of mentoring they adopt, and the key practices used to deliver schemes. We need to seek funding or sponsorship to commence this next stage of investigations of formal mentoring schemes. We will also need to rally mentoring scheme champions and coordinators to participate in these studies and the practical value participation can deliver to scheme operations and development.
- Gaining support for ongoing research will be vital to ensure formal mentoring schemes no longer operate under the radar but secure the recognition they deserve across the contexts and sectors they operate in. There is an important duty of care here. We know from research that toxicity in mentoring can manifest but we have not as yet sufficiently deliberated how power and control can be managed through the practices of recruitment, training, guidance and monitoring in formal mentoring schemes. We need to take the quality of formal mentoring schemes more seriously and support, often beleaguered, mentoring scheme coordinators and champions to do this too.
- This research then is a 'call to arms' to help promote wider recognition of the value formal mentoring schemes contribute at the personal, organisational and societal levels and engage different communities; the young and the old, the experienced and inexperienced, professionals across sectors and areas of expertise, politicians and academics to contribute further to the debate on formal mentoring and its significance to our private and public lives.



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